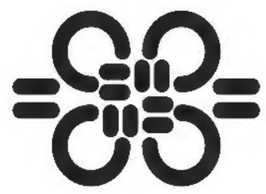
NATSUMI ANDO

9

Something's Wrong With Us

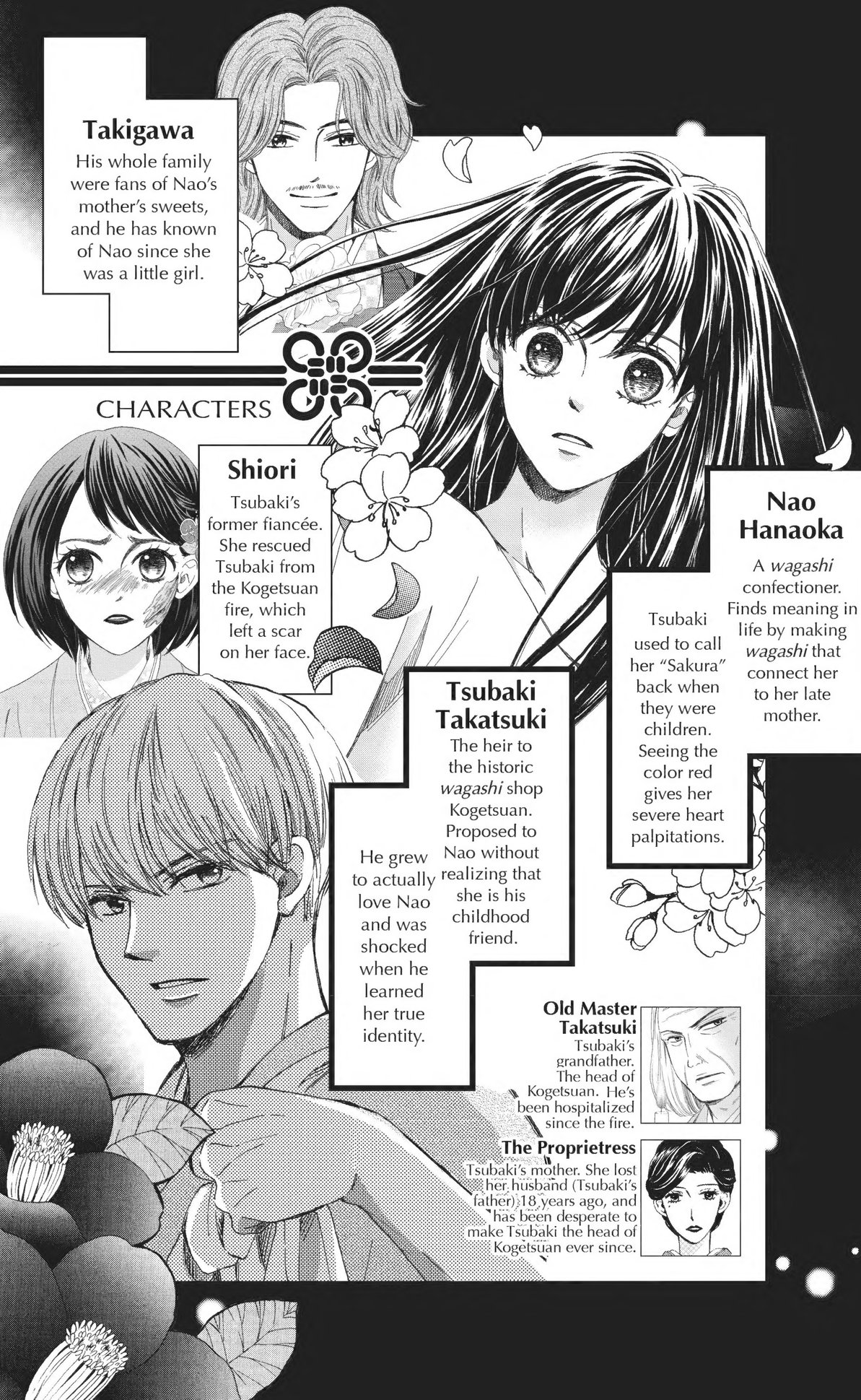
Something's Wrong With Us



NATSUMI ANDO

9

CHARACTERS



Takigawa
His whole family were fans of Nao's mother's sweets, and he has known of Nao since she was a little girl.

Shiori
Tsubaki's former fiancée. She rescued Tsubaki from the Kogetsuan fire, which left a scar on her face.

Nao Hanaoka
A *wagashi* confectioner. Finds meaning in life by making *wagashi* that connect her to her late mother.

Tsubaki used to call her "Sakura" back when they were children. Seeing the color red gives her severe heart palpitations.

Tsubaki Takatsuki
The heir to the historic *wagashi* shop Kogetsuan. Proposed to Nao without realizing that she is his childhood friend.

He grew to actually love Nao and was shocked when he learned her true identity.

Old Master Takatsuki
Tsubaki's grandfather. The head of Kogetsuan. He's been hospitalized since the fire.

The Proprietress
Tsubaki's mother. She lost her husband (Tsubaki's father) 18 years ago, and has been desperate to make Tsubaki the head of Kogetsuan ever since.

STORY

When Nao hides her identity and marries Tsubaki to get access to Kogetsuan, she gradually finds herself falling in love with him. However, once Nao discovers the secret behind their parentage, she decides she has to leave. Tsubaki also finds out that Nao is actually "Sakura," the girl from his childhood.

Then a fire breaks out in Kogetsuan, during which Nao passes out, and Tsubaki is left unconscious in a critical state, separating the two against their will.

The years go by, and Nao opens her own shop called Hanagasumi. With Takigawa's help, she's determined to take over Kogetsuan to avenge her late mother. Meanwhile, Tsubaki resolves to forget his feelings for Nao and finally gets back on his feet, giving everything he has into winning the *wagashi* selection against Hanagasumi.

What exactly happened to Nao in the three years since she left Kogetsuan?

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 42
The Three-Year Blank — 4

CHAPTER 43
Determination — 37

CHAPTER 44
Budding Flower — 75

CHAPTER 45
Wakura Onsen — 115

Chapter 42 *The Three-Year Blank*

I THOUGHT I COULD FORGET ABOUT IT ALL.

ALL OF IT WOULD MELT AWAY LIKE SNOW.

MY FEELINGS FOR TSUBAKI...

WHAT MOMMA LEFT BEHIND...

SIX MONTHS AFTER THE KOGETSUAN FIRE...

...JANUARY IN HAKUSAN CITY.

和沙

和沙

御菓子処 和沙

Sign: *Wagashi* Shop Kazusa

FLICK

FLICK

ポン!
FOOM

THAT'S GREAT!

THANK YOU.

IT'S COLD OUT TODAY, SO I KEPT IT ON THE SOFT SIDE.

BOSS.

CAN YOU CHECK THE *GYUHI* I JUST FINISHED?

OH.

IN THAT CASE...

IT'S A LITTLE EARLY, BUT GO TAKE YOUR BREAK ONCE YOU GET TO A STOPPING POINT.

SHE'S SUCH A HARD WORKER.

THUNK THUNK THUNK

THUNK.

I WAS SURPRISED THAT SHE WAS LOOKING FOR A LIVE-IN POSITION IN THIS DAY AND AGE.

BUT SHE'S SO ATTENTIVE. IT'S BEEN GREAT.

STILL, IT'S A LITTLE WORRYING.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HANAOKA-SAN...

...HOW LONG HAS SHE BEEN WORKING FOR US NOW?

HALF A YEAR.

I DON'T THINK I'VE SEEN HER SMILE, NOT EVEN ONCE...

IN THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY AFTER LEAVING KOGETSUAN...

DESPITE ITS LONG HISTORY, THE CUSTOMERS ARE PRACTICALLY ALL NEIGHBOR-HOOD REGULARS, AND BUSINESS IS VERY LAID-BACK.

"WAGASHI SHOP KAZUSA"...

...A SMALL STORE STAFFED ONLY BY THE COUPLE THAT OWNS IT AND ONE PART-TIME WORKER.

和沙

御菓子処 和沙

WOW... TALK ABOUT FREEZING.

MAYBE I'LL GET SOME FRESHLY BAKED *MANJU* TODAY.

...IT FELT VERY SAFE AND COMFORTING..

...

TAKI-GAWA-SAN...

PLEASE DON'T COME HERE ANYMORE.

DON'T WORRY.

I HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE. NOT EVEN YUKO-SAN OR JOJIMA-KUN.

ALL THEY KNOW IS THAT YOU SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED FROM THE HOSPITAL.

THAT'S AWFULLY HARSH.

I DON'T GET HURT EASILY, BUT THAT STINGS!

I ONLY MEAN ...

IF SOME-ONE...

...I SWORE TO MYSELF I'D GET YOU YOUR OWN SHOP.

WHEN YOU TOLD ME THAT ALL YOU WANTED...

...WAS TO MAKE SWEETS...

I NEVER IMAGINED YOU'D REFUSE...

...

I CAN'T ASK THAT OF YOU.

...

SEE.

IT'S *MY* DREAM.

I WANT TO FIGURE IT OUT ON MY OWN.

IT'S THAT SPIRIT OF YOURS, NAO-CHAN.

THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME LIKE YOU SO MUCH.

I'LL STOP BY EVERY WEEK...

GIVE MY REGARDS TO YOUR MOTHER.

... TO ADD A BIT OF CHEER TO YOUR ROOM.

N—

NO! NOT EVEN CLOSE!!

IS HE YOUR BOYFRIEND, HANAOKA-SAN?

THAT MAN WITH THE MOUSTACHE...

THAT'S NICE TO SEE.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD MAKE A FACE LIKE THAT.

GIVE MY REGARDS TO YOUR MOTHER.

...HAVING FLOWERS AROUND DOES KEEP MY SPIRITS UP.

WELL...

RUSTLE

Dear Itsuki

could you

when I

I'm sorry.

If only I could

I still love yo

But—

MOMMA'S KEEPSAKES...

...THAT TAKIGAWA-SAN KEPT FOR ME ALL THIS TIME.

Yuriko Okuro-sama

Mother and Child Health Handbook

母子健康手帳

PHOTOGRAPHIC

Muller

TUNK

Dear Itsuki Takatsuki,

What could you have thought when I disappeared so suddenly...?

I'm sorry.

If only I could always be by your side.

I still love you just the same as I always have.

But-

GOOD MORNING.

AH, HANAOKA-SAN.

CLENCH

SWIP

YES.

YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF THE WHITE PLUM BLOSSOM.

A... ARE YOU SERIOUS?!

...I WANT YOU TO MAKE ONE OF THE SEASONAL *JO-NAMAGASHI.*

STARTING TODAY...

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

I'LL DO MY VERY BEST!

I'M SO...

SO HAPPY...

ALL I WANT IS TO MAKE SWEETS.

UNTIL THAT DAY...

Sign: Kazusa

MAYBE I CAN LIVE LIKE THAT.

A SMALL BUT COZY SHOP...

...WHERE CUSTOMERS EAT WHATEVER SWEETS I MAKE THAT DAY, AND I GET SMILES IN RETURN.

I DREAMED OF IT WHEN I WAS LITTLE.

I MIGHT BE ABLE TO MAKE IT COME TRUE HERE.

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT...

I WANT TO BE HAPPY.

WHEN I LOOK UP AT THE MOON NOW, IT LOOKS BEAUTIFUL.

I'M SURE I CAN BE.

ガラン
CLATTER

YES, THAT'S ME...

I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

POLICE...?

ARE YOU NAO HANAOKA-SAN?

I'M FROM THE PREFECTURAL POLICE.

JULY 16TH. THAT'S...

JULY 16TH...

LAST SUMMER...

WHAT WERE YOU DOING, AND WHERE?

JULY 16TH, TO BE EXACT.

...THE DAY OF THE FIRE!

THAT WAS SO LONG AGO...

TH...

I'M NOT SURE OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD.

WHISPER WHISPER

GASP

WHY ARE THE POLICE ASKING ABOUT THE FIRE...?

WHY...

C...

CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS SOMEWHERE ELSE?

WHAT WITH THE CASUALTY AND ALL.

WE'RE REINVES-TIGATING THAT FIRE.

YOU DON'T RECALL THE FIRE IN YOUR OWN HOME?

BACK THEN...

...YOU WERE ENGAGED TO THE YOUNG MASTER OF KOGETSUAN, WEREN'T YOU?

WHAT?

WHY...

YOU MUST HAVE HAD QUITE A GRUDGE AGAINST HIM.

WE'VE HEARD THAT THE OLD MASTER GAVE YOU A VERY TOUGH TIME.

NO, I...

...ENTERING THE OLD MASTER'S ROOM THAT DAY.

SOMEBODY SAW YOU...

IT'S HER.

SHE DID IT TO MOMMA, AND NOW ME...

As the proprietress of such a historic shop...

...you must have your hands full.

What philosophy keeps you going?

Always treat customers with sincerity.

Ever since I married into this family, the shop has been my life.

Nothing is more important than that.

光月庵

Kogetsuan is celebrating its 420th anniversary this year.

It's a historic shop known throughout the prefecture.

Sign on TV: Kogetsuan

Why, yes. Once...

We had a demon in our midst, which was very distressing.

Eighteen years ago, I believe.

...who took advantage of my husband's kindness to ruin the shop.

There must have been hardships throughout its long history.

WHAT INSPIRING WORDS...

...FROM SUCH A HISTORIC SHOP.

A "demon," you say?

She was a confectioner...

But...

...I suppose the gods really do watch over us.

The demon got what she deserved.

AWFUL.

THERE ARE TERRIBLE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.

You can't get away with being evil, can you?

Nasty people like that don't deserve to be called confectioners.

INFO
DISPLAY
POWER

BLIP ZZZZ

HANAOKA-SAN...?

The snow will continue into tomorrow...

...making it a record-breaking snowfall.

We urge everyone to be on alert—

I WANT TO FORGET.

I JUST WANT TO PUT IT ALL BEHIND ME...

...!

WHY?

WHISH

HANAOKA-SAN!

WHOOSH

ザザザザ

HUFF

HUFF

HUFF

IT'S TOO DARK TO TELL.

HOW FAR HAVE I COME ...?

KRSH

THE POLICE WILL BE BACK.

I CAN'T STAY AT KAZUSA ANYMORE.

...!

OW...!

DRIP

DRIP

DRIP

DRIP

HAAH

HAAH

HAAH

I'M...

...ALL WORN OUT...

HHGH

HHGH

HHGH

...THE PAST KEEPS TRACKING ME DOWN...

NO MATTER HOW FAR I GO...

I'M SORRY, MOMMA...

...N.

...CHAN.

THANK GOODNESS, NAO-CHAN.

TA...

...KI...

...GAWA-SAN.

DON'T WORRY, I'LL GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY!

NAO-CHAN!

I GOT TO KAZUSA AND THEY TOLD ME YOU WEREN'T BACK YET...

DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THIS.

SERI-OUSLY.

I REALLY WANT SOME *ZENZAI* TODAY.

RIP

RIGHT AWAY.

I SWEAR!

TAKIGAWA-SAN...

NAO-CHAN?!

I'M... SORRY...

WHY ARE YOU LIKE THIS...?

...FOR EVERY-THING...

...TAKI-GAWA-SAN...

I JUST...

NAO-CHAN!!

ONCE YOU'RE GONE...

...WHO'S GOING TO REMEMBER YOUR MOTHER?

SHE'LL BE LOST FOREVER.

HER KIND-NESS...

HER WARMTH...

...WANT TO SLEEP NOW...

YOU CAN'T, NAO-CHAN. STAY WITH ME.

WAKE UP!

YOUR MOTHER WILL DIE A SECOND TIME...

...NAO-CHAN!

Dear Itsuki Takatsuki,

I still think it's a miracle that I got to meet you in middle school.

Since I lost both of my parents when I was little, you were the first person to teach me the warmth of being loved.

WHENEVER YOU TALKED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF KOGETSUAN, YOUR EYEBROWS WOULD LIFT JUST A LITTLE,

AND I REALLY LOVED THE WAY YOU DID THAT.

IN MY DREAMS, I HOPE I CAN DESIGN A CONFECTION TO SELL AT KOGETSUAN SOMEDAY.

YOU KNOW THAT LITTLE PATH WITH SAKURA TREES WE USED TO WALK THROUGH? I THINK A YOKAN WITH THAT MOTIF WOULD BE PERFECT.

THAT WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS ON TOP OF THE WORLD.

WHENEVER YOU TOLD ME THAT A SWEET I MADE WAS DELICIOUS...

BEFORE I KNEW IT, KOGETSUAN HAD BECOME MY DREAM, TOO.

HAPPY...

IF SOMEDAY WE HAVE A CHILD TOGETHER WHO ALSO GROWS UP TO MAKE SWEETS...

THAT'S THE FIRST ONE I'LL TEACH THEM HOW TO MAKE.

I KNOW IT'S AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM.

BUT I TELL MYSELF I CAN DREAM A LITTLE.

I KNOW I CAN'T BE THE PROPRIETRESS...

JUST IMAGINING IT IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME HAPPY.

...BUT SO MANY MORE WERE ONES SHE WROTE BUT NEVER SENT.

...SOME WERE FROM ITSUKI-SAN...

AMONG MAMA'S LETTERS...

...GOT WHAT SHE DESERVED.

THE DEMON...

...EVEN IN DEATH.

...SHE'LL KEEP SMEARING MOMMA'S NAME...

AS LONG AS THAT WOMAN'S AT KOGETSUAN...

...

TAKIGAWA-SAN...

I'LL TRAIN HARDER, TOO...

I SWEAR I'LL PAY YOU BACK...

I NEED YOUR HELP... PLEASE ...

MOMMA.

I UNDER-STAND, MOMMA.

PLEASE LET ME HAVE A SHOP OF MY OWN.

I'LL NEVER WISH FOR ANYTHING ELSE, EVER AGAIN.

I HAVE TO MAKE MOMMA'S UNFULFILLED DREAM COME TRUE.

Chapter 43 *Determination*

IS SOMEONE THERE...?

HII WHOOOSH

TSUBAKI...

ARE HIS EYES NOT WORKING...?

CAN HE NOT SEE?

TSU—

TSUBAKI-SAN.

TSUBAKI-SAN!

...SHIORI-SAN?

はっ GASP

I'M SORRY.

I COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THE SELECTION...

OH!

BUT...

I SWEAR IT'S NOT BECAUSE I DIDN'T HAVE FAITH IN THE SWEET YOU MADE ...!

uh...

SST...

WHY ARE YOU HERE, SHIORI-SAN?

YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY...?

OF COURSE NOT.

"KUMEI"* IS THE MOST PERFECT CONFECTION I'VE EVER MADE.

LET'S GO BACK TO THE SHOP AND WAIT FOR THE RESULTS.

*The moon's reflection on clear water.

TSUBAKI-SAN?

はっ GASP

IT'S NOTHING.

LET'S GO.

...

SAKURA THAT BLOOM OUT OF SEASON...

...DON'T FLOWER IN THE SPRING.

IT'S DECIDED, THEN.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION TODAY IN THE SELECTION.

BOTH SWEETS WERE TRULY REMARKABLE.

IT REALLY WAS.

GOOD-NESS...

...THAT WAS A TOUGH DECISION.

...HANAGASUMI-SAN.

I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE WAITING...

WE JUST...

...FINISHED MAKING OUR DECISION.

庵月光

Sign: Kogetsuan

THEY CHOSE KOGETSUAN.

WE'VE RETURNED.

TSUBAKI-SAN!

WE JUST GOT A CALL...

...ABOUT THE SELECTION RESULTS FROM SAMIDARETEI.

REALLY?!

YES.

THEY SAID THEY WANT TO MEET AND DISCUSS THE *ENYUKAI** SOON.

*A garden party event.

CONGRAT-ULATIONS, TSUBAKI-SAN!

I'M GLAD...

...THAT I MANAGED TO DO THE JOB RIGHT.

I'M SO GLAD...

THINGS ARE GOING TO GET BUSY.

KUMEI

THAT'S TRUE.

RUSTLE

YOU SHOULD BE.

NOW I DON'T HAVE TO BE ASHAMED IN FRONT OF OUR ANCESTORS.

I SUPPOSE IT WASN'T WORTH WORRYING ABOUT.

...

HANA-GASUMI...

Sign: Hanagasumi

I CAN'T BELIEVE...

...THEY TURNED YOUR SWEET DOWN, NAO-CHAN.

...THAT THEY WOULDN'T CHOOSE US.

WELL ...

...I DID EXPECT...

TAKIGAWA-SAN?

SO...

NOW'S MY ACTUAL CHANCE TO CONSOLE YOU, RIGHT?

C'mon, dive right in. ♥

DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

PLOP

THE POINT WASN'T TO WIN THE SELECTION.

...

SO?

DID YOU SEE TSUBAKI-KUN?

STILL...

YOUR SWEETS TASTE BETTER THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD, NAO-CHAN.

WHEN I WAS OFF ALONE...

...TRAINING IN TOKYO...

...I DIDN'T.

...

...JUST ONCE.

...I ATE SWEETS FROM KOGETSUAN...

JUST ONE BITE, AND I IMMEDIATELY KNEW...

...THAT TSUBAKI HADN'T MADE THEM.

THEY'RE FROM THAT FAMOUS PLACE IN KANAZAWA.

REALLY? WOW.

I WAS DEVASTATED.

...I LOST EVERYTHING.

HE WASN'T INTERESTED IN MAKING SWEETS.

HE JUST WANTED THE KOGETSUAN NAME.

HE JUST WANTED TO MAKE THE SHOP HIS.

ME DURING THE PROMISE WITH SACRIFICED HIS TSUBAKI

THIS WAS IT?

AND FOR THAT...

IS SOMEONE THERE...?

IS THAT WHY HE STOPPED MAKING SWEETS?

IS IT HIS EYES?

IT DOESN'T MATTER...

IWAGASHI NOTES

...WHY TSUBAKI ISN'T MAKING SWEETS.

KA-TUNK

NOT ANYMORE...

GENERAL HOSPITAL

YES.

IT BLURS A LOT MORE FREQUENTLY NOW.

SOME-TIMES, I CAN'T EVEN TELL WHO SOMEONE RIGHT NEXT TO ME IS...

OPTOMETRIST

I SEE.

SO YOUR VISION'S GETTING WORSE.

BLIND...?

LET'S TAKE A LOOK.

I SUPPOSE IT MUST BE FROM THAT FIRE.

I THINK YOU SUSTAINED SOME RETINAL DAMAGE.

HMM...

WHEN SHOULD WE SCHEDULE IT?

WE SHOULD RUN SOME TESTS AND DO AN OPERATION SOON.

IF YOU PUT IT OFF,

THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU'LL GO BLIND.

WILL I BE ABLE TO WORK ON FINE DETAILS AFTER THE SURGERY?

IT DEPENDS ON THE PERSON, BUT IT CAN TAKE MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS FOR YOUR VISION TO RETURN TO NORMAL AFTER SURGERY.

SOMETIMES, IT NEVER FULLY RECOVERS.

I CAN'T...

TAKATSUKI-SAN?

...

NOT FOR THE TIME BEING...

MONTHS...OR EVEN YEARS...

KFP-SAK-T

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO BE UP?

...ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR CURSES, GRAND-FATHER?

IS THIS...

I'LL JUST HAVE TO PRAY THAT MY EYESIGHT LASTS UNTIL THEN.

I **HAVE** TO BE THE ONE TO MAKE THEM.

...TO MAKE SWEETS FOR OUR TEA HOUSE NEXT YEAR.

WE CHOSE A DIFFERENT PLACE...

IF WE PRESENT INADEQUATE SWEETS AT THE EVENT IN APRIL...

...THE SHOP WILL LOSE ITS REPUTATION FOR SURE.

I COULDN'T THANK YOU MORE,

SIR.

CLATTER

CLATTER

IS IT A GUEST?

"SIR"?

Sign: Kogetsuan

"JUDGE"
...?

THEY MIGHT HAVE GONE WITH A DIFFERENT PLACE OTHERWISE.

I FOUND ANOTHER JUDGE WHO AGREED TO COOPERATE.

THERE WAS A SHOP THAT MAKES THE MOST INTERESTING SWEETS.

I'M SO GLAD WE SEE EYE TO EYE, SIR.

IT'S CALLED ...

..."HANA-GASUMI," I THINK.

I'M GLAD I SECURED VOTES FOR KOGETSUAN.

SLAM

THANKS TO YOU, WE GET TO MAKE THE SWEETS FOR THE *ENYUKAI.*

WHAT...

...WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

I HOPE YOU'LL EXCUSE HIM, SIR.

BE CONSID-ERATE OF OUR GUEST, TSUBAKI-SAN.

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD TAKE MY LEAVE.

AND WHAT IF I DID?

DID YOU MANIPULATE...

ONE OF THE JUDGES?

...!

I DIDN'T NEED YOUR HELP TO—

YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE WON?

YOU SHOULD BE THANKING ME.

IF I HADN'T DONE ANYTHING, THEY MIGHT HAVE CHOSEN ANOTHER SHOP.

YOU WERE LISTENING, WEREN'T YOU?

...

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT THINKING OF DECLINING THEIR OFFER.

DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT KIND OF FOOLISH HONESTY...

...IS ENOUGH TO PROTECT KOGETSUAN?

EVEN PROTECTING ISN'T ENOUGH.

I'M PREPARED TO FACE THE FIRES OF HELL FOR THE SAKE OF THIS SHOP.

WE CAN'T SHOW ANY TRACE OF WEAKNESS.

KOGETSUAN MUST ALWAYS BE NUMBER ONE.

...AREN'T YOU?

YOU ARE, TOO...

THE GRAB

...

...

JUST KNOWING THAT YOUR BLOOD RUNS THROUGH MY VEINS...

...IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME SICK.

OH...

...

SORRY.

S...

I...

...AND HAND THE *ENYUKAI* OVER TO ANOTHER SHOP.

THAT WOULD BE THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

I SHOULD TELL SAMIDARETEI THE TRUTH...

YOU MUST THINK I'M DESPICABLE.

...

BUT ***I'M*** GOING TO MAKE THE SWEETS FOR THE *ENYUKAI*.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE HERE.

YOU SHOULD LEAVE THIS PLACE, SHIORI-SAN.

U...

UM...

I LIKE THE WAY YOU WALK, TSUBAKI-SAN.

I...

I'VE...

...ALWAYS ADMIRED IT.

I'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYONE ELSE LIKE THAT.

JUST ONE STEP, AND I'M CAPTIVATED.

...COMMANDING...

WITH A POSTURE THAT'S PERFECTLY UPRIGHT...

...BEAUTIFUL...

...STRAIGHT, UNWAVERING...

...AND GRACEFUL.

I THINK A BEAUTIFUL MANNER OF WALKING...

...MEANS THE GODS HAVE GIVEN THAT PERSON A PATH TO PURSUE.

YOUR DECISION MAY NOT BE RIGHT, BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S WRONG, EITHER.

I WOULD NEVER THINK YOU'RE DESPICABLE...

EVER.

NO MATTER WHAT.

NO MATTER WHAT ...

...AN ODD PERSON, SHIORI-SAN.

YOU'RE...

...

HONESTLY ...

WHAT THAT COUNCILMAN SAID...

THEY MIGHT HAVE GONE WITH A DIFFERENT PLACE.

"HANAGASUMI," I THINK.

...

"HANAGASUMI."

THERE'S SOMETHING I WOULD LIKE TO INQUIRE ABOUT...

HELLO, IS THIS SAMIDARETEI?

WHAT IS THIS?

THIS ODD FEELING...

SLAM

Bag: Kogetsuan

EEK!

THUD

I'M FINE.

YOUR SWEETS...

OH DEAR, THEY MAY HAVE GOTTEN SQUASHED.

THUMP

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT HURT.

I-I'M SO SORRY!

I WAS DISTRACT-ED...

PLEASE, IT'S NO PROBLEM.

BUT... IF THEY'RE *JO-NAMA-GASHI*...

GIVEN THE SEASON, THEY WOULD BE *INOKOMOCHI*.

KOGETSUAN'S *INOKOMOCHI* ARE DUSTED WITH *KINAKO*, RIGHT?

THAT MAY HAVE COME OFF.

YOU'RE AWFULLY KNOW-LEDGEABLE.

WELL...

I ACTUALLY RUN A *WAGASHI* SHOP MYSELF.

IT'S A TINY PLACE, CALLED "HANAGASUMI."

...AT THE SAMIDARETEI SELECTION.

THE ONE THAT MADE THAT SWEET...

"HANA-GASUMI"?

MY SHOP IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER.

CAN I OFFER YOU SOME TEA AS AN APOLOGY?

HANA-
GASUMI...

IT'S STILL NEW, HAVING OPENED THREE MONTHS AGO ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN.

I CAN'T HELP BUT BE CURIOUS.

OH.
THAT PLACE?

JUST TURN RIGHT AT THE END OF THE STREET.

SHIORI-SAN...

...DO YOU KNOW WHAT "HANAGASUMI" MEANS?

UH...?

DISTANT FLOWERS THAT APPEAR HAZY, AS IF THROUGH A MIST.

IT MEANS...

"HANA-GASUMI."

花かすみ

...SAKURA BLOSSOMS, IN FULL BLOOM...

SPECIFIC-ALLY...

Sign: Hanagasumi

Chapter 44 *Budding Flower*

I DO APOLOGIZE FOR SLAMMING INTO YOU EARLIER.

OH, MY.

SO YOU'RE A COUNCIL-MAN.

THIS IS OUR *INOKOMOCHI.*

I HOPE YOU FIND IT SATISFYING.

WOW!

ARE YOU SURE?

I'D LIKE TO GET SOME TO TAKE HOME.

CAN YOU WRAP UP FIVE TO GO?

I'LL PREPARE THEM RIGHT AWAY.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

THIS REALLY IS DELICIOUS!

I THOUGHT SO AT THE SELECTION, TOO, BUT THE SWEETS YOU MAKE LEAVE QUITE AN IMPRESSION.

IT MAKES ME HAPPY TO HEAR THAT.

花がすみ

Sign: Hanagasumi

ガラ
CLATTER

IT'S AN AWFULLY SMALL SHOP.

WAIT.

DAIFUKU ...

JO-NAMA-GASHI ...

MONAKA, YOKAN...

SOMETHING ABOUT THESE SWEETS...

...FEELS FAMILIAR...?

YOU'RE—

OH?

THANK YOU FOR WAITING, SIR.

HUH.

EVEN THE YOUNG MASTER OF KOGETSUAN WORRIES ABOUT HIS RIVALS, IT SEEMS.

IS THIS FEEL-ING...

...LOVE OR HATRED?

NAO...

花びら

WHOOOSH

WHAT...

...DO I SAY?

HER HAIR'S QUITE A BIT LONGER.

AND...

...SHE SEEMS A BIT THINNER?

HERE YOU GO, SIR.

THANK YOU.

PLEASE EAT THEM TODAY.

BUT...

I'LL STOP BY AGAIN.

WHY...?

...IT'S DEFINITELY NAO.

NAO.

YOU WERE NOWHERE TO BE FOUND...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?

I'M SORRY FOR THE WAIT, SIR.

WOULD YOU LIKE SOMETHING TO GO?

WHA—

I'LL HAVE THE SEASONAL *JO-NAMA-GASHI,* TO EAT HERE.

YOU WANT TO PLAY DUMB?

...

I WOULD RECOM-MEND THE *YOKAN.*

OR THE SEASONAL *JO-NAMA-GASHI.*

WELL, THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

YOUR ORDER, THE *"FUKUBE."*

THANK YOU FOR WAITING.

"FUKUBE"...

BECAUSE ITS VINES EXTEND FAR AND BEAR CLUSTERS OF FRUIT,

IT'S A SYMBOL OF PROSPERITY AND FERTILITY.

AS YOU MUST KNOW, THE *HYOTAN* GOURD HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONSIDERED AUSPICIOUS.

ANOTHER WORD FOR THE HYOTAN *GOURD...*

MAY KOGETSUAN...

...PROSPER AND BEAR MUCH FRUIT IN THE ***RIGHT*** WAY.

PLEASE ENJOY.

THIS SHOP...

...IS SO CLOSE TO KOGETSUAN...

WHAT ARE YOU—?

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH HANAGASUMI?

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN.

WHY...

WHAT I REALLY WANT TO ASK IS—

NO...

IT WAS MY DREAM TO HAVE MY OWN SHOP.

CAN'T YOU BE HAPPY FOR ME?

WHY DID YOU DISAPPEAR WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING?!

THE DAY OF THE FIRE!

IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS: WHY NOW...?

IF I HAD WAITED THAT DAY...

...WOULD IT HAVE CHANGED ANYTHING?

...

IT WAS.

...IF IT *WAS* ALL A LIE?

REMEMBER WHEN YOU ASKED ME...

IT WAS ALL A LIE.

WHO...

HOW COULD I EVER LOVE THE PERSON WHO MADE MOMMA A MURDERER?

OBVIOUSLY.

WHO IS THIS...?

I'M
SAKURA,
TSUBAKI.

REMEMBER?

BESIDES, THE DAY OF THE FIRE...

...YOU CHOSE WHAT YOU VALUED OVER OUR PROMISE, TOO, RIGHT?

...!

NA—

YOUR SWEET WILL GET DRY, SIR.

BUT THOSE...

...AND THAT SHOP...

...BELONG TO ME.

TAKIGAWA-SAN...?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...?

THE TWO OF US.

BELONGS TO HER AND ME.

THIS SHOP...

SO...

...I WON'T EVER LET YOU HURT HER.

I SWEAR.

SHE'S MY PRECIOUS PARTNER.

BOTH FOR BUSINESS...

...AND AS A WOMAN.

SUCH A COLD TONE...

AS IF SHE'S REJECTING EVERYTHING ABOUT ME...

PLEASE TAKE YOUR LEAVE IF YOU'RE NOT PLANNING ON PURCHASING ANYTHING.

SIR.

Bills: 2,000 JPY = approx. 20 USD

NAO...

NAO...

I'M SAKURA.

I WANT SOMETHING MADE BY THAT GIRL...

...SAKURA.

A SWEET MADE BY SAKURA...

NAO...

I WISH I HADN'T FOUND HER.

I SHOULD HAVE JUST KEPT THE MEMORIES...

...AS A PRECIOUS MEMENTO OF HAPPY TIMES.

MADE BY SAKURA...

I HAD FORGOTTEN...

...THAT FINDING EACH OTHER...

...WOULD JUST LEAD TO MORE HATRED.

庵月光

Sign: Kogetsuan

THE PROPRIETRESS FROM SAMIDARETEI IS IN THE GUEST ROOM RIGHT NOW, HERE TO DISCUSS BUSINESS...

TSUBAKI-SAN.

YOU HAVE A VISITOR.

NO, NOTHING IN PARTICULAR.

I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

IS THERE SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND?

YOU'VE BEEN KIND OF DISTRACTED LATELY.

GASP はっ

TSUBAKI-SAN?

...

A *WAGASHI* FAIR AT A HOT SPRING RESORT?

YES. MY OLDER SISTER IS THE PROPRIETRESS OF AN INN AT THE WAKURA ONSEN HOT SPRINGS, AND SHE WAS A JUDGE FOR THE SELECTION THE OTHER DAY.

SHE WAS CAPTIVATED BY THE *WAGASHI* SHE TASTED THERE...

WAKURA ONSEN'S THAT HOT SPRING RESORT THAT GETS TONS OF TOURISTS FROM ALL OVER JAPAN!

SO I'M HOPING...

THAT KOGETSUAN MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP.

...AND SHE WANTS TO OFFER A HOT SPRING PACKAGE THAT INCORPORATES *WAGASHI*.

IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE?

YOU SEEM A LITTLE CONFLICTED.

I'M SO GLAD.

OF COURSE, WE WANT A HISTORIC SHOP LIKE YOURS.

WE WOULD LOVE TO BE INVOLVED.

REALLY?

"ANOTHER SHOP"?

MY SISTER ALSO HAS ANOTHER SHOP IN MIND...

WELL...

...

TOURISTS WON'T BE EXCITED OVER A SHOP THEY DON'T RECOGNIZE!

OH, BUT...!

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT, AS WELL...

HANAGASUMI.

HOW ABOUT WE WORK TOGETHER WITH HANAGASUMI?

THEN...

TSUBAKI-SAN!

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

ARE YOU SURE?

...TASTING FLAVORS FROM BOTH SHOPS.

I'M SURE GUESTS WOULD ENJOY...

IF THEY AGREE TO IT, OF COURSE.

...AND KOGETSUAN THE *HIGASHI* TO FINISH OFF.

HANAGASUMI CAN MAKE THE *OCHA-GASHI**,

CAN I ASK THAT OF YOU?

I KNOW, PERHAPS YOU CAN MAKE SOME SWEETS FOR THE OCCASION?

WELL, WE'RE HOLDING OUR *ROBIRAKI* CEREMONY AT THE START OF NEXT WEEK.

I'LL CONTACT HANAGASUMI.

WHY DON'T WE ALL MEET THEN, MY SISTER INCLUDED?

OF COURSE.

TSUBAKI ...?

*Sweets to go with tea.

I DON'T INTEND TO HAND THEM OVER.

WELL, NAO.

BUT— THOSE...

BELONG TO ME.

NO MATTER WHAT.

I'D BE HONORED TO ACCEPT.

EVERY TIME.

HANA-GASUMI THIS, HANAGASUMI THAT...

WHAT A NUISANCE.

DO YOU THINK...

...THEY'RE UP TO SOME-THING?

KOGETSUAN DID WHAT?!

...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?!

WAIT, PLEASE ...!

RRRR

WHAT?!

...SAYS THEY CAN'T SELL US BEANS ANYMORE.

OUR *AZUKI* BEAN SUPPLIER...

WHAT'S THE MATTER, NAO-CHAN?

HUH?!

WE WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND *AZUKI* BEANS OF EQUAL QUALITY IN TIME.

BUT ISN'T THE *ROBIRAKI* CEREMONY AT THE START OF NEXT WEEK?

...

HER AGAIN.

SHE DID THIS.

THE ROBIRAKI CEREMONY.

IN EARLY NOVEMBER, AS WINTER APPROACHES...

THE FURO* IS PUT AWAY AND THE HEARTH IS OPENED...

*A tool for boiling water in the tea room.

...MARKING THE START OF A NEW YEAR IN TEA CEREMONY TRADITION.

IT IS A VERY IMPORTANT AFFAIR, CONSIDERED TO BE THE TEA PRACTITIONER'S NEW YEAR CELEBRATION.

I'M THE PROPRIETRESS OF THE KOMICHI HOT SPRING INN.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COME HERE TODAY.

THIS IS MIYO FUJIMURA, MY SISTER.

JOJIMA?

M...

MY FEET CAN'T TAKE IT ANY MORE...

ALREADY?!

...FOR INVITING US.

WE'RE THE ONES WHO SHOULD THANK YOU...

LET'S START WITH THE *OCHAGASHI.*

I'LL BRING OUT KOGETSUAN'S *HIGASHI...*

AFTER WE SERVE THE *SENCHA* TEA.

NO ONE FROM HANAGASUMI IS HERE.

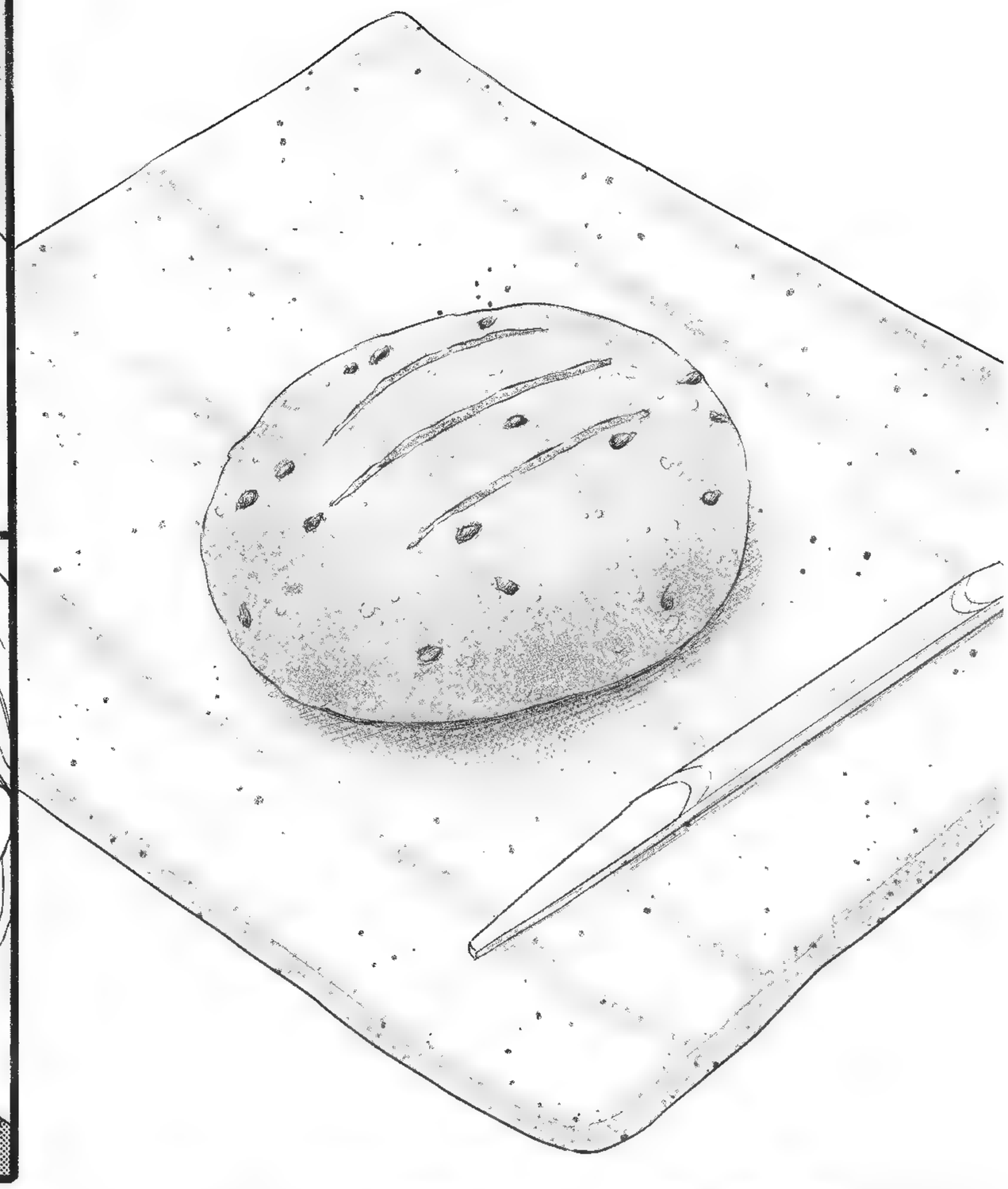
ANY WAGASHI IS HARD TO MANAGE WITHOUT QUALITY BEAN PASTE.

THEY MUST HAVE HAD TO DECLINE.

NATURALLY.

I SUPPOSE THEY RUSHED TO FIND ANOTHER SHOP?

AN INOKO-MOCHI...



WHAT A DELIGHTFUL TEXTURE.

IT'S DELI-CIOUS!

IT REALLY IS.

THE EXTRA SESAME GIVES IT A NICE TOASTY FLAVOR.

OH, MY. THIS *MOCHI*...

IT HAS QUITE A BIT OF NON-RICE GRAINS IN IT, TOO.

YES.

IT GOES WELL WITH THE CHEWY *MOCHI*.

AND THE DRIED PERSIMMON ADDS SOME STICKINESS TO THE PASTE.

WHICH SHOP MADE THIS SWEET?

HANAGASUMI DID, I ASSUME.

WHY YES...THEY ACTUALLY CAME BY A LITTLE WHILE AGO...

THEY INSIST THAT THEY AREN'T FIT FOR A TEA CEREMONY.

...BUT THEY'RE WAITING IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR.

WH-WHAT DO YOU—

WHERE ARE THEY TODAY?

WHAT...?

HANAGASUMI-SAN.

HOW CAN THAT BE...?

PERHAPS I SHOULD INVITE THEM TO JOIN ANYWAY.

BUT HOW...?

N...

NAO-SAN.

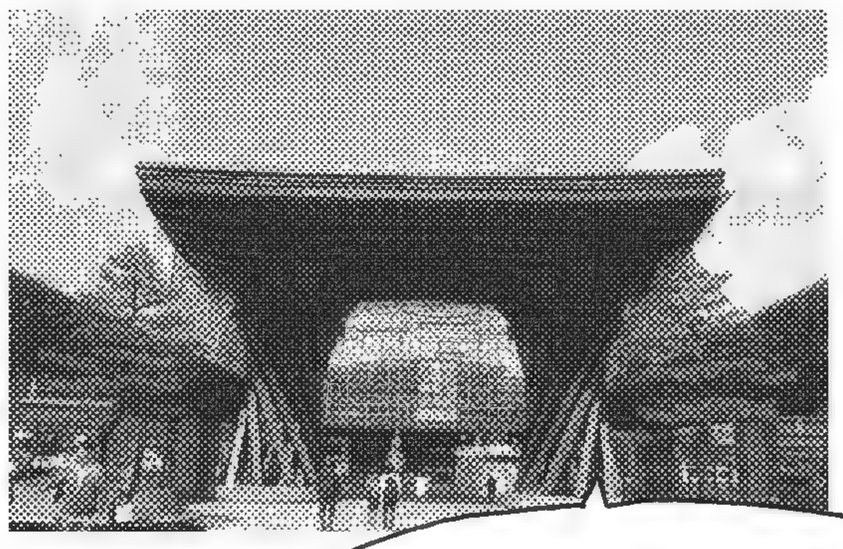
Chapter 45 *Wakura Onsen*

Tracing Something's Wrong With Us

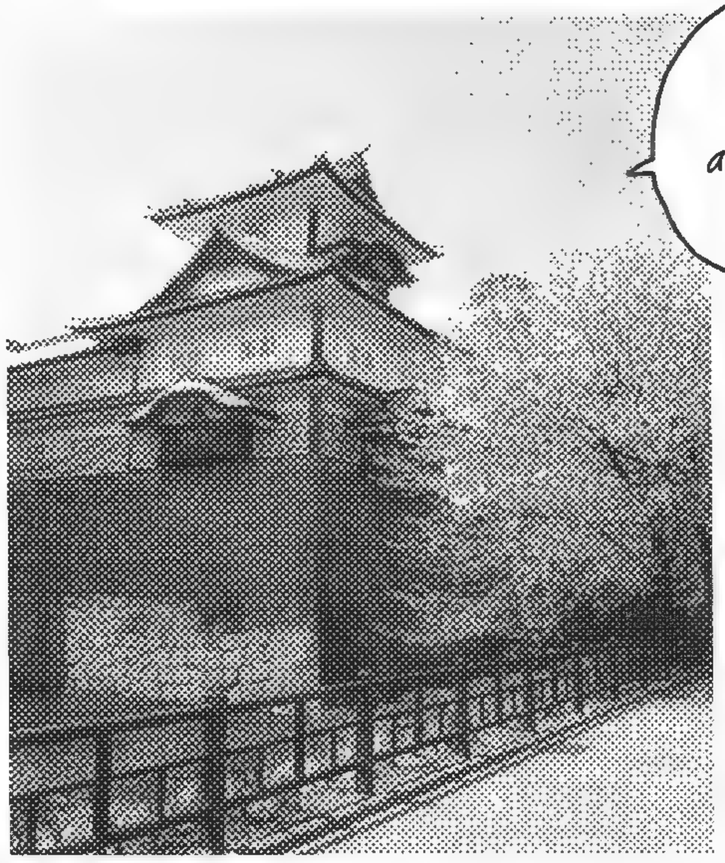
on

A Tour Around KANAZAWA

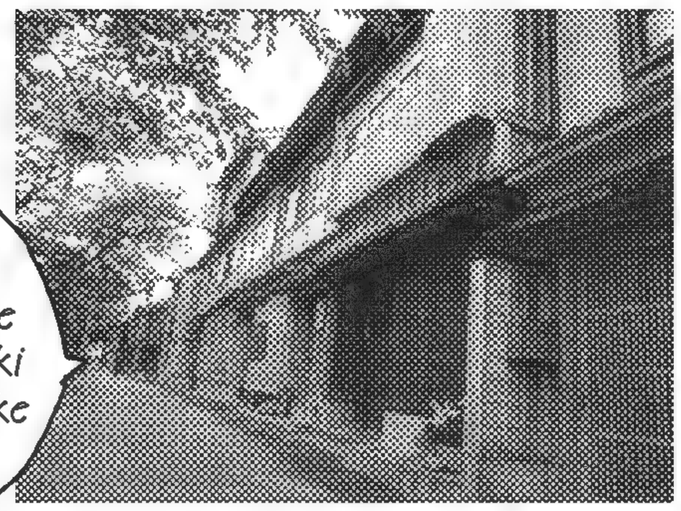
Here are some of the many, many photos I took when scoping out Kanazawa.



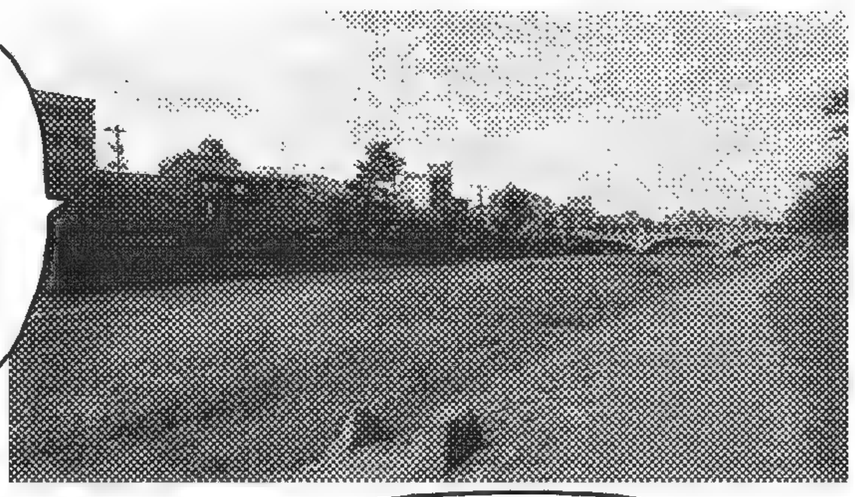
Kanazawa's "gateway," the Tsuzumi-mon. What a sight! Understandably chosen as one of the 14 most beautiful train stations in the world.



Ishikawa-mon gate of the Kanazawa Castle. It was sakura season and a row of sakura trees stretch beyond the gate.



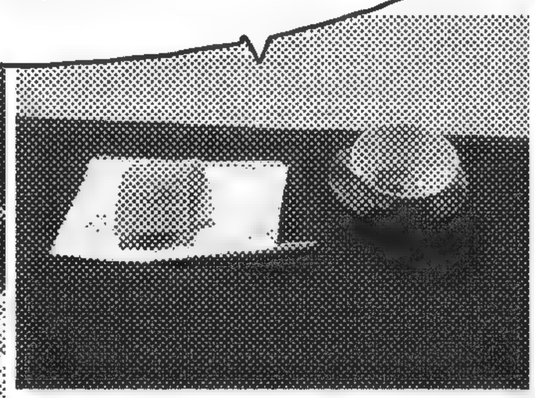
The Kazue-machi Chaya District. I used it in volume 2 in the scene where Tsubaki holds Nao's hand to "act like a married couple."



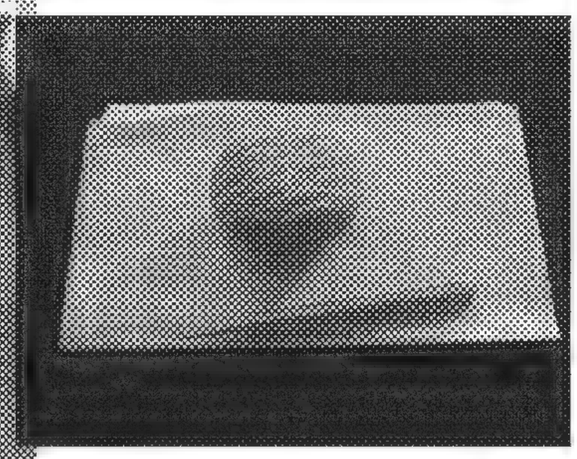
The Asano River that runs near the Higashi Chaya District. Shiori slept on these banks after she left home.

The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art. I haven't been in yet, so I want to check it out the next time I go!

Gold leaf soft-serve ice cream, Kanazawa's specialty, and the wagashi I got to eat at the Hyakumangoku Festival in June.



The must-visit tourist spot, Kenrokuen Garden. There are a few tea houses on the grounds that always draw me in!



N...

NAO-
SAN...

IT HAS DRIED PERSIMMONS MASHED INTO IT.

ESPECIALLY THIS FILLING...

THE OCCASIONAL PUNGENT TANG REALLY BRINGS OUT THE SWEETNESS OF THE BEAN PASTE.

HANA-GASUMI-SAN.

THIS *INOKO-MOCHI* WAS VERY GOOD.

WHY WERE YOU IN ANOTHER ROOM?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

CONSIDERING YOU PROVIDED SUCH A PERFECT CONFECTION.

THERE WAS NO NEED TO ABSTAIN FROM THE TEA CEREMONY,

I WAS...

A LITTLE WORRIED ...

...

FOR SOME REASON, OUR USUAL *AZUKI* SUPPLIER SUDDENLY REFUSED TO SELL US BEANS...

...SO I WASN'T USED TO WORKING WITH THE *AZUKI* FOR THESE.

OH!

I WOULD NEVER HAVE NOTICED.

EACH VARIETY OF *AZUKI* HAS ITS OWN PERSONALITY.

I THOUGHT ADJUSTING THE RECIPE TO GO WITH THESE BEANS WOULD BRING OUT THE BEST IN THEM.

I SEE.

OH.

WHY DON'T I INTRODUCE YOU TO AN *AZUKI* SUPPLIER I KNOW OF?

THAT'S QUITE AMAZING.

THEY'RE VERY GOOD.

REALLY?

I WOULD LOVE THAT.

I HOPE...

...I'LL HAVE A LASTING RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM.

FLAP FLAP FLAP

WELL, EVERY-ONE...

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING TODAY.

KOGET-SUAN-SAN AND HANA-GASUMI-SAN...

DO YOU HAVE SOME TIME TO SPARE ON THE WEEKEND?

TO WAKURA...?

IF SO, WHY DON'T YOU VISIT THE KOMICHI HOT SPRING INN?

...

THAT WAY, YOU CAN BEST CONSIDER WHAT KIND OF SWEETS TO MAKE.

I'D LIKE YOU TO ACTUALLY STAY OVERNIGHT TO GET A FEEL FOR THE ATMOSPHERE.

TOGETHER...

...WITH TSUBAKI...?

I WOULD LIKE THAT VERY MUCH.

THAT'S A VERY GRACIOUS OFFER.

IT'S NOT LIKE TSUBAKI AT ALL...

PLUS, HE KNEW IT WOULD BE WITH ME.

...TO WORK WITH ANOTHER SHOP.

Nao-chan.

You should be careful.

EVEN IF HE IS...

...I CAN'T TURN BACK NOW.

IS HE UP TO SOMETHING?

I WOULD LOVE TO GO AS WELL.

PLEASE EXCUSE US.

...

YOU KNEW.

YOU KNEW THAT WOMAN WAS THE OWNER OF HANAGASUMI.

YOU TWO HEAD ON BACK TO THE SHOP.

DID YOU USE YOUR INFLUENCE ON THE *AZUKI* SUPPLIER THIS TIME?

DIRTY TRICKS LIKE THAT...

WON'T DETER NAO.

NAO...

SAKURA...

...IS PLANNING ON TAKING OVER KOGETSUAN.

AND...

SHE'S CON-VINCED...

...THAT IT WASN'T HER MOTHER WHO KILLED FATHER EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO.

AFTER I SAW...

...FATHER AND SAKURA'S MOTHER TOGETHER...

I WAS IN SUCH A STATE OF SHOCK...

THAT'S RIGHT.

THAT DAY...

WHAT'S THE MATTER, TSUBAKI-SAN?

YOU SHOULDN'T BE UP AT THIS HOUR.

...

IT WASN'T ME.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO PROVED MY INNOCENCE.

...I COULDN'T SLEEP AT ALL.

THAT NIGHT...

OH, ALL RIGHT.

YOU CAN SLEEP IN MY ROOM, JUST FOR TONIGHT.

YOU CAN'T SLEEP?

I REMEMBER THAT CLEARLY, EVEN NOW.

AND SHE DIDN'T LEAVE THE ROOM UNTIL MORNING CAME.

...

I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE'S BACK...

I THOUGHT THAT MISERABLE WRETCH HAD RUN AWAY FOR GOOD...

"TAKE OVER KOGETSUAN"?

HE CAN'T BE SERIOUS.

I'M GLAD WE CLEARED THAT UP.

WE CAN'T HAVE SOMEONE FROM KOGETSUAN TURNING OUT TO BE A MURDERER.

DON'T TELL ME YOU STILL HAVE FEELINGS FOR THAT WOMAN.

HOLD ON, TSUBAKI.

TSUBAKI!

GRIT

THAT LITTLE **PEST...**

NAO-SAN!

...KUN.

JOJIMA ...

WHY...

WHERE WERE YOU ALL THIS TIME...?

I WAS SO WORRIED.

YOU JUST DISAP-PEARED...

AND NOW YOU'RE SUDDENLY BACK...?

I'M SORRY.

I REALLY AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, JOJIMA-KUN.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME DURING THE FIRE.

I DON'T—

JOJIMA-KUN.

I'M WORKING HARD IN MY OWN SHOP NOW.

I'M REALLY HAPPY.

SO PLEASE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.

GOOD LUCK ACHIEVING YOUR DREAM.

I'M SORRY...

...

...JOJIMA-KUN.

YOU'RE GOING TO WAKURA, TSUBAKI-SAN?!

I'LL BE BACK AFTER THE WEEKEND. PLEASE TAKE CARE OF THINGS WHILE I'M GONE.

HUH...?

庵月光

Sign: Kogetsuan

はっ
GASP

SHIORI-SAN?

OH, SORRY.

HAVE A SAFE TRIP. I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU.

...

Sign: Wakura Onsen Station

和倉温泉駅

THE WEEK-END...

LOCATED AT THE BASE OF THE NOTO PENINSULA, THE SOURCE OF THE SPRING IS ACTUALLY IN THE OCEAN, WHICH IS UNUSUAL, EVEN IN JAPAN.

LEGEND HAS IT THAT A LONE WHITE HERON FOUND THE SOURCE OF THE HOT SPRINGS...

...HERE AT WAKURA ONSEN.

湯宿 こみち

WELCOME TO KOMICHI.

こみち

こみち

Sign: Hot Spring Inn Komichi

YES.

OF ALL THE INNS, KOMICHI IS THE CLOSEST TO THE SEA.

THE OCEAN IS SO CLOSE.

YOU MUST BE TIRED FROM THE TRIP.

OH, NO.

I'M VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE INVITATION.

...

BA-DUMP

THIS IS PURELY FOR BUSINESS.

I'M HERE TO MAKE SWEETS WITH KOGETSUAN.

LET'S DO OUR BEST HERE...

YOUR ROOMS ARE THIS WAY.

WE'VE PREPARED ROOMS 401 AND 402 FOR YOU.

...KOGETSUAN-SAN.

PLEASE COME DOWN WHEN IT'S TIME.

WE'LL PREPARE YOUR DINNER IN THE RESTAURANT ON THE SECOND FLOOR.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EVERYTHING.

IT'S ONLY FOR TWO DAYS, BUT PLEASE MAKE YOURSELVES AT HOME.

I HOPE YOU GET TO KNOW WAKURA AND THIS INN VERY WELL...

...TO MAKE *WAGASHI* THAT OFFER A ONE-OF-A-KIND EXPERIENCE.

THE SEA BREEZE FEELS SO NICE.

I'VE NEVER BEEN TO A HOT SPRING BEFORE IN MY LIFE!

WOW!

I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY PEOPLE WANTED TO GO TO HOT SPRINGS...

...BUT THE ATMOSPHERE ALONE IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ME RELAX.

ゴクリ GLUP

ゴクリ GLUP

WHEW

TSUBAKI...

...IS RIGHT NEXT DOOR.

カチャ CLUNK

カチャ CLUNK

カチャ CLUNK

KNOWING THAT MAKES MY HEART RACE...

FRESHLY CAUGHT SEAFOOD IS ONE OF OUR SPECIALTIES.

THIS IS... ...SO MUCH!

I'M SORRY, PROPRIETRESS. CAN YOU SPARE A MOMENT?

THE VIVID SHEEN OF THE FISH IS VERY APPETIZING.

EVERYTHING'S EXCEPTIONALLY FRESH.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

IT'S DELICIOUS.

パタン TUNK

THAT'S RIGHT...

...

...HE ALWAYS EATS SO GRACEFULLY...

SILENCE...

し・・・ん

...

...WEAR A *YUKATA* HERE.

YOU DIDN'T...

...

WHAT KIND OF SWEETS ARE YOU THINKING OF?

YOU ALREADY HAVE SOME IDEAS, DON'T YOU?

HUH?

WHY DO YOU CARE?

YES, WITH A VARIETY OF *WAGASHI* ARRANGED ON ONE TRAY.

I THINK IT WOULD BE VISUALLY APPEALING TO TOURISTS.

ANMITSU, DANGO...

...MONA-KA...

LOTS OF DIFFERENT KINDS.

WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER.

THERE'S NO REASON TO KEEP SECRETS, RIGHT...?

I'M THINKING OF AN ALL-*WAGASHI* PLATTER.

SOME-THING LIKE A SEAFOOD PLATTER...

A "PLAT-TER"?

I WANT TO GIVE IT THE FEEL OF THE OCEAN.

AND THEN...

I'D MAKE THE *KANTEN* FOR THE *ANMITSU* THE COLOR OF THE SEA...

...AND SHAPE THE *MONAKA* LIKE SEASHELLS.

AND THE OCEAN IN AUTUMN, AT THAT!

WITH PLENTY OF AUTUMN FLAVORS...!

TSU-BAKI?

NOTHING.

YOU SHOULD SCRAP THE OCEAN IDEA.

HUH?

WHY...?

...

THEN WHAT DO *YOU* HAVE IN MIND?

I'M THINKING OF SWEETS THAT REPRESENT THAT.

MANY HAIKU POETS VISITED WAKURA AND WROTE POEMS ABOUT THIS PLACE.

むNNG

WHAT, YOU CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT YOURSELF?

I THINK IT WOULD BORE TOURISTS.

DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S A BIT DULL?

I DOUBT THAT WOULD BE EXCITING.

ISN'T THE APPEAL OF *WAGASHI* THAT THEY CONVEY TRADITIONAL REFINEMENT?

WHEN TOURING AROUND THE CITY, SURE.

BUT LEARNING ABOUT THE DESTINATION IS PART OF THE TRIP.

THIS ISN'T...

...

はっOH

COME ON...

WHY AM I GETTING SO WORKED UP...!?

WHY...

WHY DID YOU AGREE...

...TO TAKE ON THIS JOB WITH US?

WHO KNOWS...?

I COULDN'T TASTE THE FOOD AT ALL AFTER A CERTAIN POINT...

...

FWUMP

HOT SPRING RESORTS ARE AMAZING!

...TO TAKE OVER KOGETSUAN?

SO ARE WE REALLY CONTINUING WITH THE PLAN...

CLATTER

THE FUTON'S OUT ALREADY.

WHY?

...MIGHT CHANGE YOUR MIND, NAO-CHAN.

I THOUGHT THE TRIP TO WAKURA...

EXCUSE ME.

HANAOKA-SAMA.

THE SPECIAL ROOFTOP OUTDOOR BATH IS OPEN FOR WOMEN AT THIS TIME.

PLEASE GO AND ENJOY, IF YOU'D LIKE.

THANK YOU.

HIS EYES...

...HAVEN'T CHANGED.

...AND THEN HE GAINS THE UPPER HAND.

THEY DON'T BETRAY WHAT HE'S THINKING...

露天風呂

...BUT I CAN'T LOOK AWAY...

Curtain: Outdoor Bath

MAYBE...

...I SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN ON THIS JOB, AFTER ALL.

IS SOMEONE THERE?

...

WHAT...

...DID YOU JUST SAY?

NAO-SAN...

...IS THE OWNER ...

...OF HANAGASUMI?

THAT'S RIGHT.

THAT'S WHY TSUBAKI-SAN AGREED TO THE JOB.

THE RESTLESSNESS IN MY HEART IS JUST GETTING WORSE...

HUH...?

RUSTLE

I DON'T THINK IT'S REALISTIC...

...TO THINK YOU CAN WIN HIM OVER.

...

TH...

THEN ...

RIGHT NOW, THE TWO OF THEM—

HE ONLY SHOWS THAT SIDE...

I MEAN, YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HIM...

...TO NAO-SAN.

THAT'S BECAUSE HE'S ALWAYS JUST NICE TO YOU.

...GET REALLY ANGRY OR EMBARRASSED, HAVE YOU?

ONLY HER.
NO ONE CAN
TAKE HER
PLACE.

WH-WHY?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

THE BATH IS ONLY OPEN TO WOMEN NOW!

TSU...

TSUBAKI?

IT SWITCHED OVER THIRTY MINUTES AGO.

NOT ANYMORE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IT'S NOT AS HOT OVER HERE.

WHAT...?

WHY...?

WHEW, THIS IS HOT!

はっ
GASP

SST.

TSUBAKI-SAN...?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THE LIGHTS ALL OUT?

OH, IT'S YOU, SHIORI-SAN.

I WONDERED WHO WAS IN HERE.

NO.

...GO SOMEWHERE TOGETHER, FOR ONCE?

WHY DON'T WE...

NO!

NO.

NO ONE CAN TAKE HER PLACE.

MA'AM.

I THINK...

...I MIGHT BE PREGNANT.

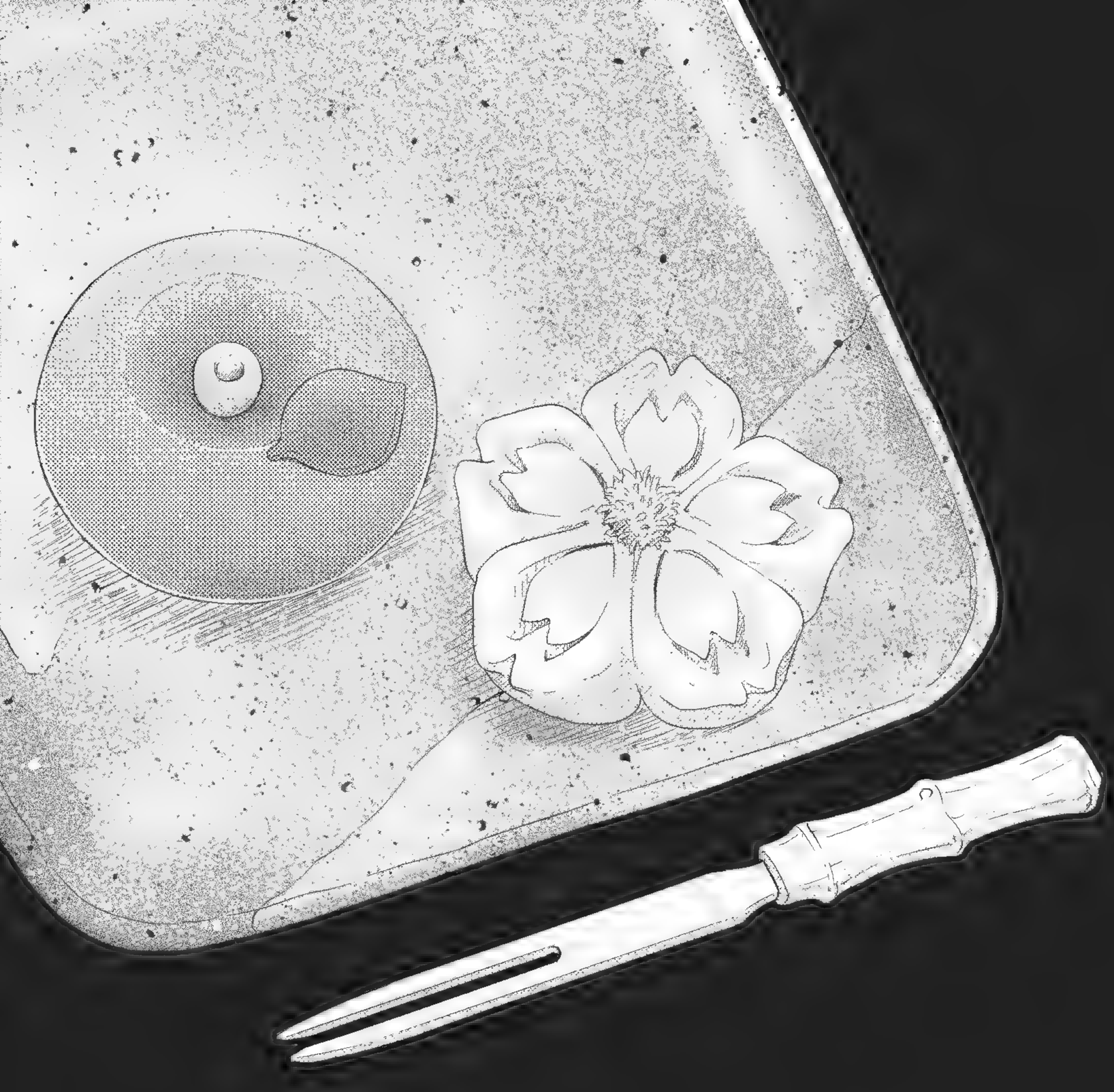
MY BODY FEELS HOT.

...TSUBAKI-SAN'S CHILD.

IT'S...

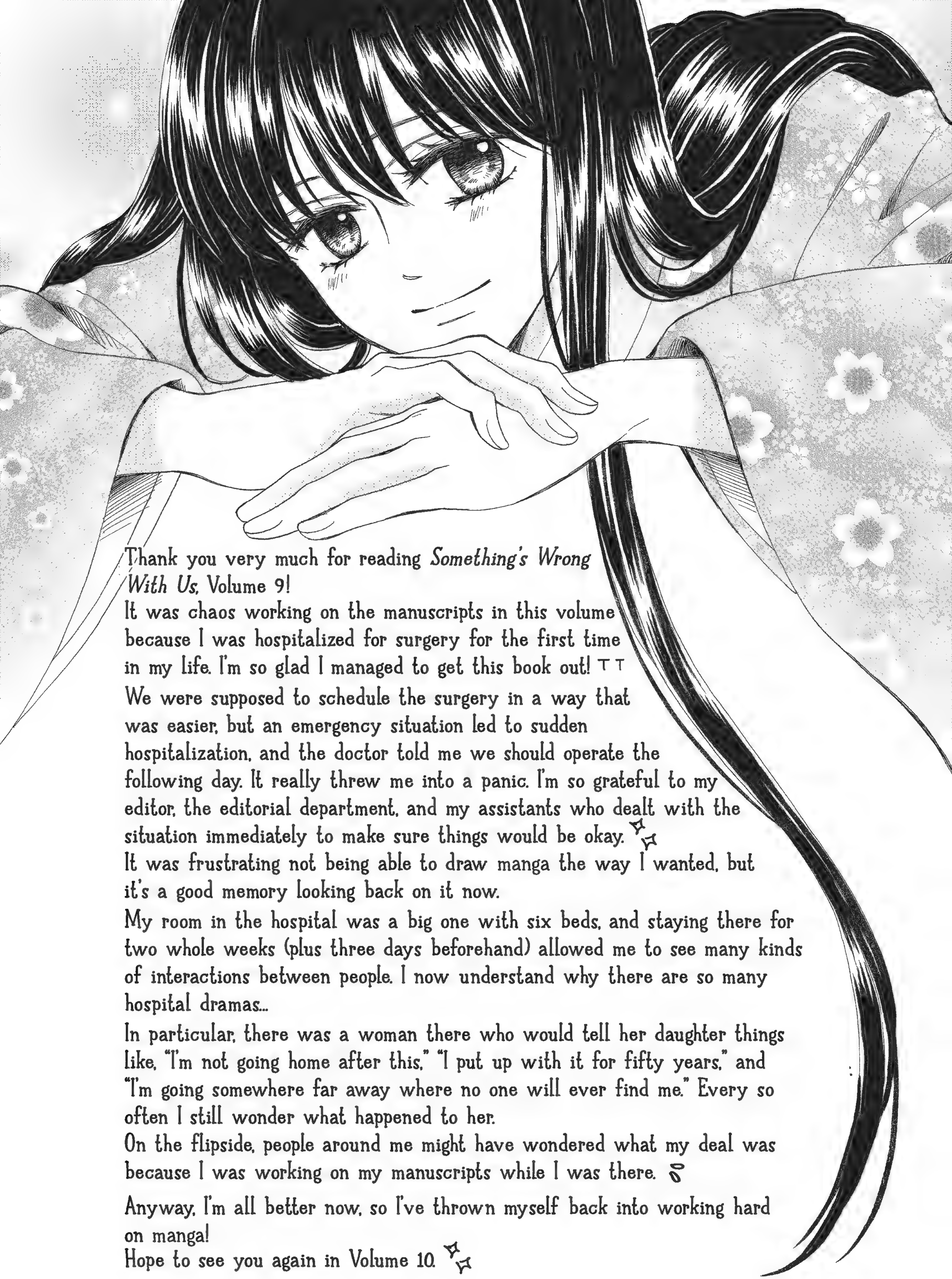
SO HOT...

...I THINK I MIGHT GO CRAZY.



Thank you so much,
Umesakura-sama,
Doi-sama,
Naganawa-sama,
Miyaji-sama,
Morizane-sama,

and my editor
Chikada-sama.



Thank you very much for reading *Something's Wrong With Us*, Volume 9!

It was chaos working on the manuscripts in this volume because I was hospitalized for surgery for the first time in my life. I'm so glad I managed to get this book out! T T

We were supposed to schedule the surgery in a way that was easier, but an emergency situation led to sudden hospitalization, and the doctor told me we should operate the following day. It really threw me into a panic. I'm so grateful to my editor, the editorial department, and my assistants who dealt with the situation immediately to make sure things would be okay.

It was frustrating not being able to draw manga the way I wanted, but it's a good memory looking back on it now.

My room in the hospital was a big one with six beds, and staying there for two whole weeks (plus three days beforehand) allowed me to see many kinds of interactions between people. I now understand why there are so many hospital dramas...

In particular, there was a woman there who would tell her daughter things like, "I'm not going home after this," "I put up with it for fifty years," and "I'm going somewhere far away where no one will ever find me." Every so often I still wonder what happened to her.

On the flipside, people around me might have wondered what my deal was because I was working on my manuscripts while I was there.

Anyway, I'm all better now, so I've thrown myself back into working hard on manga!

Hope to see you again in Volume 10.

—Natsumi Ando

Next Volume Preview

Coming soon!

Translation Notes

wagashi, page 2
Traditional Japanese confections.

gyuhi, page 7
A softer, more delicate version of *mochi* (rice cake) made by kneading glutinous rice flour and sugar over heat. The resulting product almost melts in your mouth and stays soft for longer and at low temperatures, making it an ideal choice for cold sweets.

manju, page 9
A bite-sized bun with sweet filling, usually bean paste.

jo-namagashi, page 15
Fresh, artistic *wagashi* that are made with specific (usually seasonal) motifs.

zenzai, page 29
A sweet dessert soup made from half-crushed *azuki* beans served with grilled *mochi* in it.

yokan, page 32
A smooth, jellied sweet made of bean paste and agar.

Hanagasumi-san, page 44
Hanagasumi is not Nao's name, but when people run a business (especially in retail) they can be addressed by the store's name with the -san honorific attached.

Tsubaki-san, page 59
In very formal households like the Takatsuki family, the mother will often address her children with the "-san" honorific. "-san" is akin to "Mr., Ms., Mx." etc.

inokomochi, page 71
A rice cake filled with bean paste that is made to look like a wild boarlet. This motif only appears in November, when it is traditionally eaten on Inokonohi (the day of the boarlet) to pray for good health and many descendants.

kinako, page 71
Roasted soybean ground into a powder that has a distinctive nutty flavor.

monaka, page 79
Two crispy wafers made of rice flour with a sweet filling (usually bean paste) sandwiched in between.

daifuku, page 79
Meaning "great luck," a *daifuku* is a small ball of mochi rice cake with a sweet filling, usually bean paste. Its simplicity allows for endless variations.

robiraki, page 105
An important tea ceremony held in November to "open up the hearth," signaling the start of the winter tea ceremony season (*ro* season). While a small charcoal brazier (*furo*) is used to boil water in the warmer months to keep the heat away from guests, a sunken hearth (*ro*) is used during the winter months to keep guests warm.

higashi, page 105
Literally "dried sweets," *higashi* have very little moisture and keep for longer than *namagashi* (fresh sweets).

sencha tea, page 110
A green tea made by steeping whole green tea leaves in hot water. *Sencha* has a separate tea ceremony with its own customs and traditions, but in this case, it seems to be served after the matcha green tea (a rich tea made from powdered leaves) to close the ceremony.

yukata, page 139
A more casual version of the kimono. Yukata were originally airy, unlined robes meant to be worn after a bath. Most inns in Japan provide yukata as relaxing room wear to use on the premises.

anmitsu, page 140
A dessert of *kanten* (agar) jelly, bean paste, *gyuhi*, and various fruits drizzled with *kuromitsu* (black sugar syrup).

dango, page 140
Small *mochi* dumpling balls on a skewer.

The futon's out already, page 144
In a traditional Japanese inn, the staff set up the futon bedding while the guests are eating dinner. This way, there is more space in the room during the day.

One of CLAMP's biggest hits returns in this definitive, premium, hardcover 20th anniversary collector's edition!

"A wonderfully entertaining story that would be a great installment in anybody's manga collection."
— Anime News Network

"CLAMP is an all-female manga-creating team whose feminine touch shows in this entertaining, sci-fi soap opera."
— Publishers Weekly

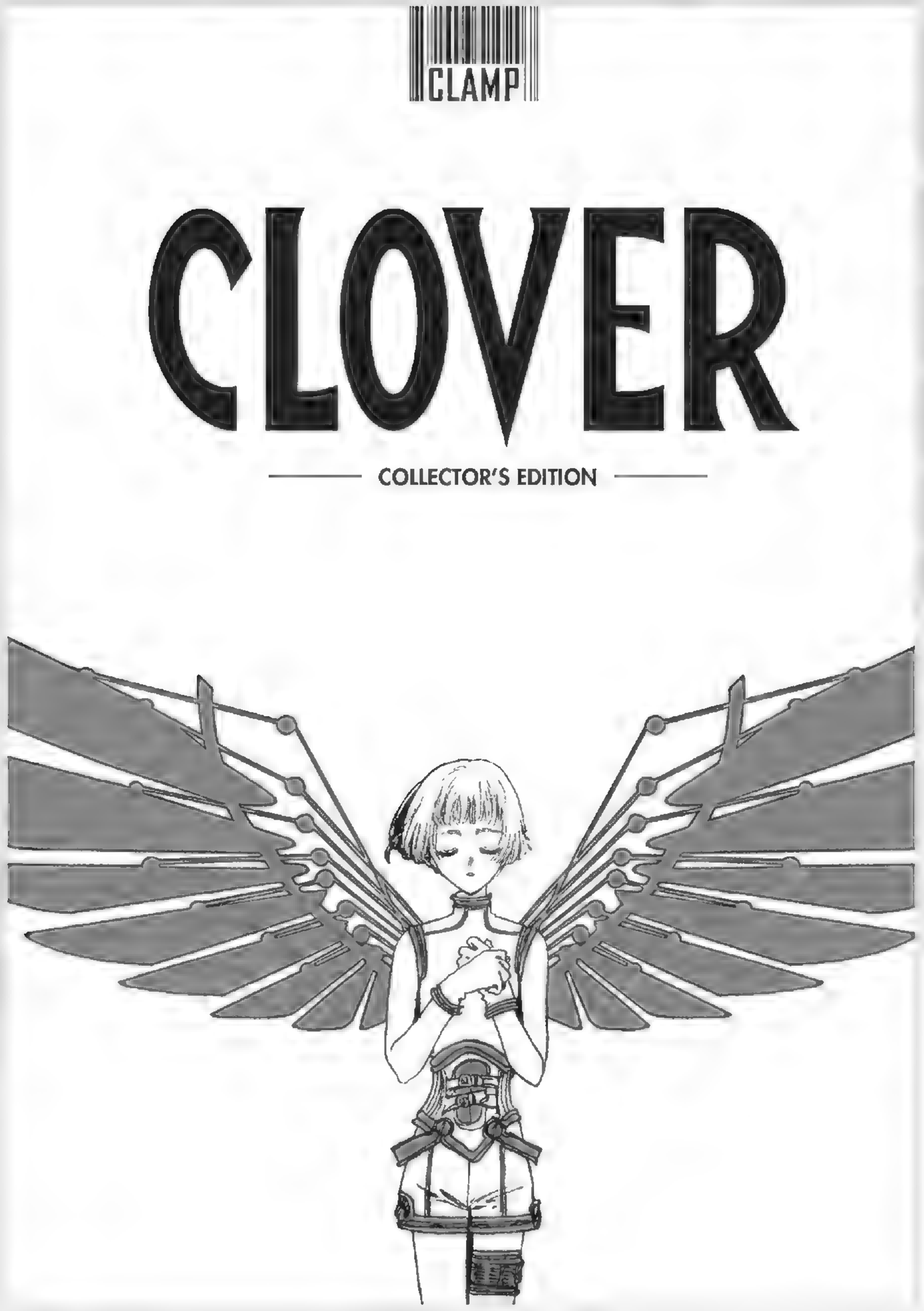
Chobits © CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.

Poor college student Hideki is down on his luck. All he wants is a good job, a girlfriend, and his very own "persocom"—the latest and greatest in humanoid computer technology. Hideki's luck changes one night when he finds Chi—a persocom thrown out in a pile of trash. But Hideki soon discovers that there's much more to his cute new persocom than meets the eye.

KC
KODANSHA COMICS

The art-deco cyberpunk classic from the creators of *xxxHOLiC* and *Cardcaptor Sakura*!

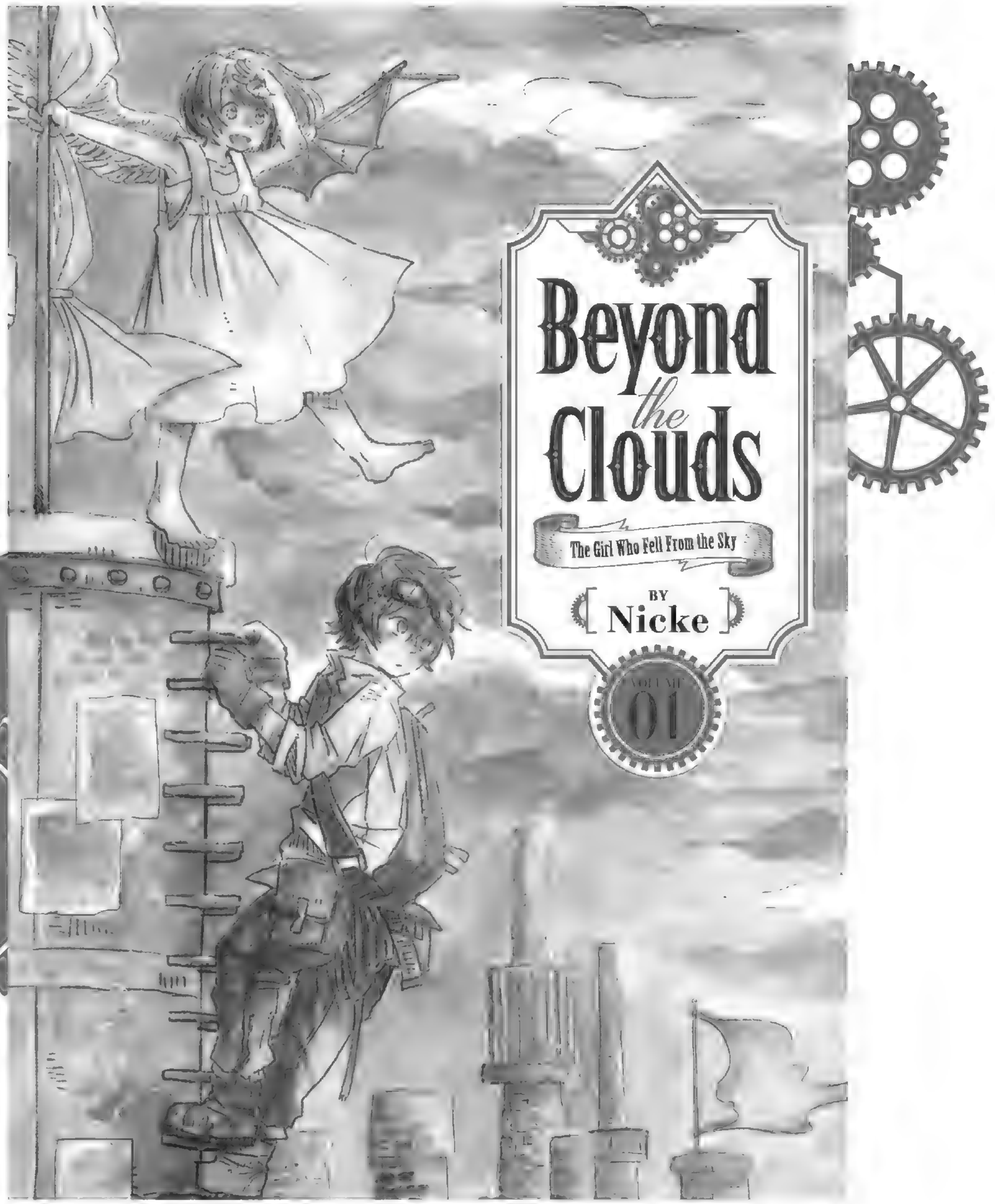
"Starred Review. This experimental sci-fi work from CLAMP reads like a romantic version of *AKIRA*."
—Publishers Weekly



Su was born into a bleak future, where the government keeps tight control over children with magical powers—codenamed "Clovers." With Su being the only "four-leaf" Clover in the world, she has been kept isolated nearly her whole life. Can ex-military agent Kazuhiko deliver her to the happiness she seeks? Experience the complete series in this hardcover edition, which also includes over twenty pages of ravishing color art!

KC
KODANSHA
COMICS

Young characters and steampunk setting, like *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Battle Angel Alita*



Beyond the Clouds © 2018 Nicke / Ki-oon

A boy with a talent for machines and a mysterious girl whose wings he's fixed will take you beyond the clouds! In the tradition of the high-flying, resonant adventure stories of Studio Ghibli comes a gorgeous tale about the longing of young hearts for adventure and friendship!

A SMART, NEW ROMANTIC COMEDY FOR FANS OF *SHORTCAKE CAKE* AND *TERRACE HOUSE*!

Living-Room Matsunaga-san © Keiko Iwashita / Kodansha Ltd.

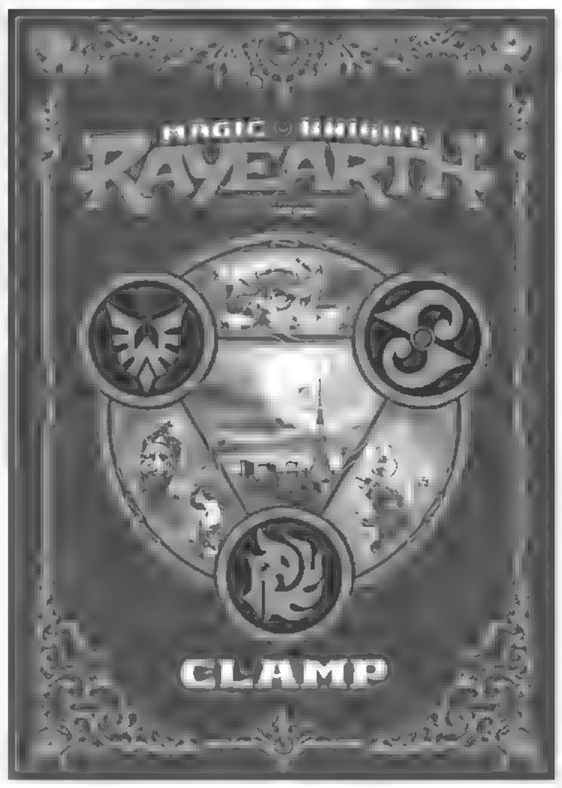
KC KODANSHA COMICS

A romance manga starring high school girl Meeko, who learns to live on her own in a boarding house whose living room is home to the odd (but handsome) Matsunaga-san. She begins to adjust to her new life away from her parents, but Meeko soon learns that no matter how far away from home she is, she's still a young girl at heart — especially when she finds herself falling for Matsunaga-san.

THE WORLD OF CLAMP!

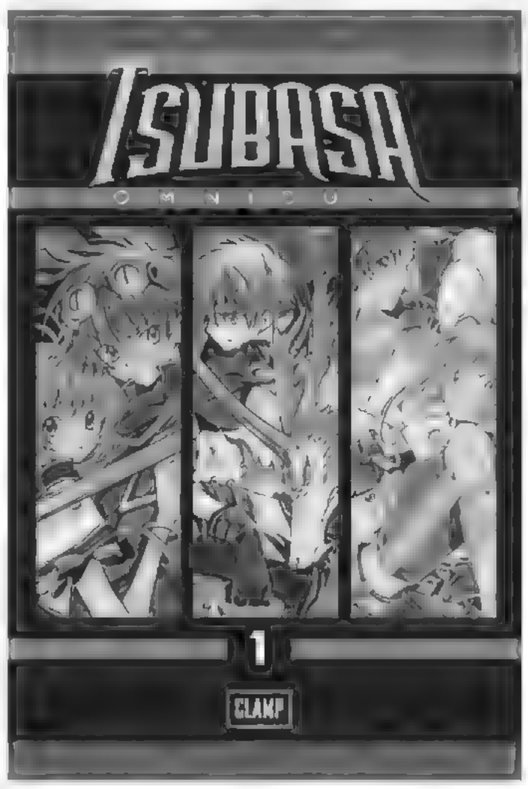
Cardcaptor Sakura
Collector's Edition

Cardcaptor Sakura:
Clear Card



Magic Knight Rayearth
25th Anniversary Box Set

Chobits

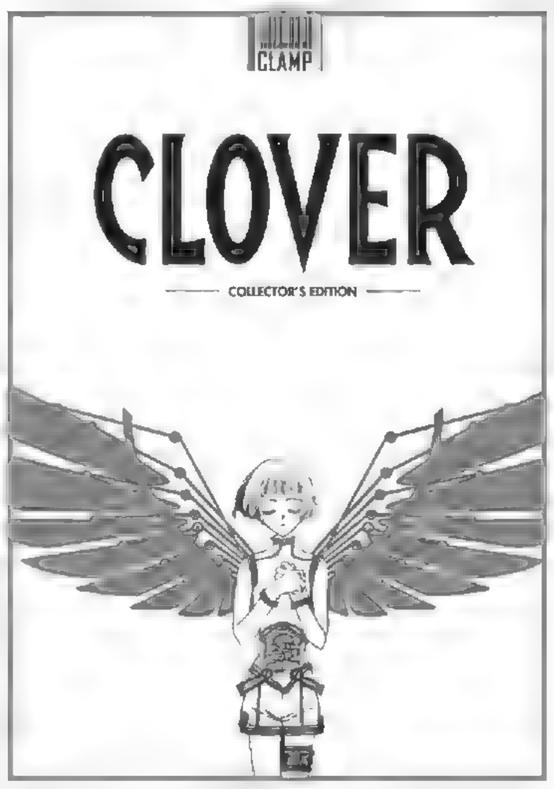


TSUBASA Omnibus

TSUBASA WoRLD CHRoNiCLE

xxxHOLiC Omnibus

xxxHOLiC Rei



CLOVER Collector's Edition

KC KODANSHA COMICS

Kodansha Comics welcomes you to explore the expansive world of CLAMP, the all-female artist collective that has produced some of the most acclaimed manga of the century. Our growing catalog includes icons like *Cardcaptor Sakura* and *Magic Knight Rayearth*, each crafted with CLAMP's one-of-a-kind style and characters!

© CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.

PERFECT WORLD

Rie Aruga

An office party reunites Tsugumi with her high school crush Itsuki. He's realized his dream of becoming an architect, but along the way, he experienced a spinal injury that put him in a wheelchair. Now Tsugumi's rekindled feelings will butt up against prejudices she never considered — and Itsuki will have to decide if he's ready to let someone into his heart...

"Depicts with great delicacy and courage the difficulties some with disabilities experience getting involved in romantic relationships... Rie Aruga refuses to romanticize, pushing her heroine to face the reality of disability. She invites her readers to the same tasks of empathy, knowledge and recognition."
—Slate.fr

"An important entry [in manga romance]... The emotional core of both plot and characters indicates thoughtfulness... [Aruga's] research is readily apparent in the text and artwork, making this feel like a real story."
—Anime News Network

KC KODANSHA COMICS

Perfect World © Rie Aruga/Kodansha Ltd

The boys are back, in 400-page hardcovers that are as pretty and badass as they are!

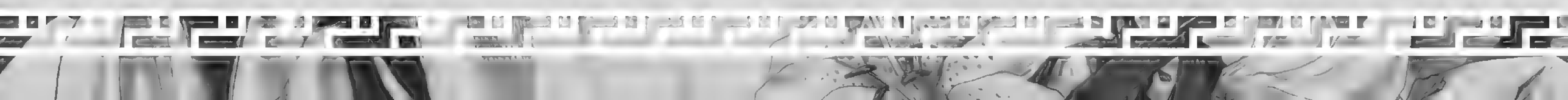
Saiyuki © Kazuya Minakura / Ichijinsha Inc.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

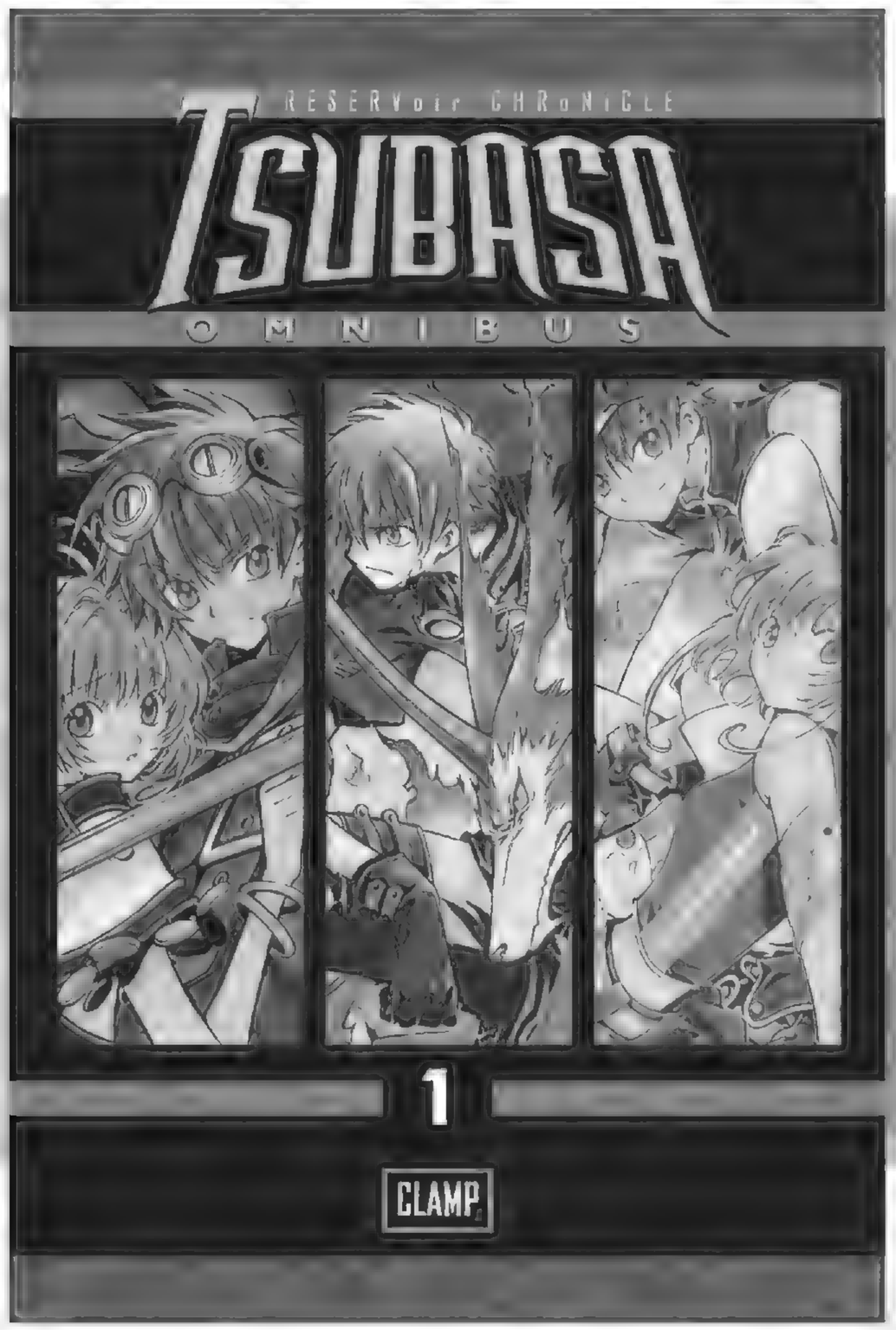
"AN EDGY COMIC LOOK AT AN ANCIENT CHINESE TALE." —YALSA

Genjo Sanzo is a Buddhist priest in the city of Togenkyo, which is being ravaged by yokai spirits that have fallen out of balance with the natural order. His superiors send him on a journey far to the west to discover why this is happening and how to stop it. His companions are three yokai with human souls. But this is no day trip — the four will encounter many discoveries and horrors on the way.

FEATURES NEW TRANSLATION, COLOR PAGES, AND BEAUTIFUL WRAPAROUND COVER ART!



The beloved characters from *Cardcaptor Sakura* return in a brand new, reimagined fantasy adventure!



"[*Tsubasa*] takes readers on a fantastic ride that only gets more exhilarating with each successive chapter." —Anime News Network

In the Kingdom of Clow, an archaeological dig unleashes an incredible power, causing Princess Sakura to lose her memories. To save her, her childhood friend Syaoran must follow the orders of the Dimension Witch and travel alongside Kurogane, an unrivaled warrior; Fai, a powerful magician; and Mokona, a curiously strange creature, to retrieve Sakura's dispersed memories!

KC
KODANSHA
COMICS

The adorable new odd-couple cat comedy manga from the creator of the beloved *Chi's Sweet Home*, in full color!

Praise for *Chi's Sweet Home*

"Nearly impossible to turn away... a true all-ages title that anyone, young or old, cat lover or not, will enjoy. The stories will bring a smile to your face and warm your heart."

—School Library Journal

Sue & Tai-chan

Konami Kanata

Sue is an aging housecat who's looking forward to living out her life in peace... but her plans change when the mischievous black tomcat Tai-chan enters the picture! Hey! Sue never signed up to be a catsitter! *Sue & Tai-chan* is the latest from the reigning meow-narch of cute kitty comics, Konami Kanata.

Sue & Tai-chan © Konami Kanata/Kodansha Ltd.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

THE SWEET SCENT OF LOVE IS IN THE AIR! FOR FANS OF OFFBEAT ROMANCES LIKE WOTAKOI

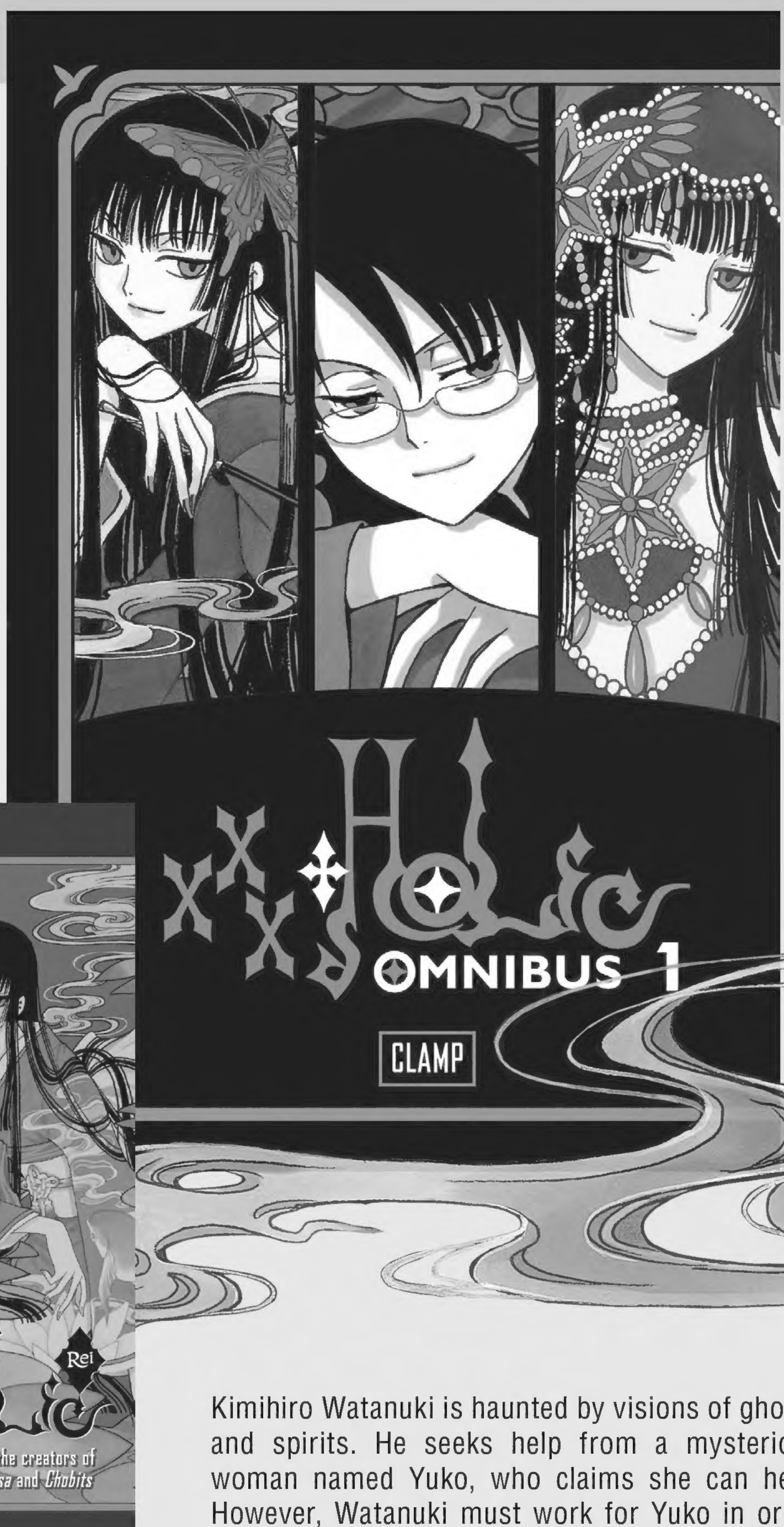
Sweat and Soap © Kintetsu Yamada / Kodansha Ltd.

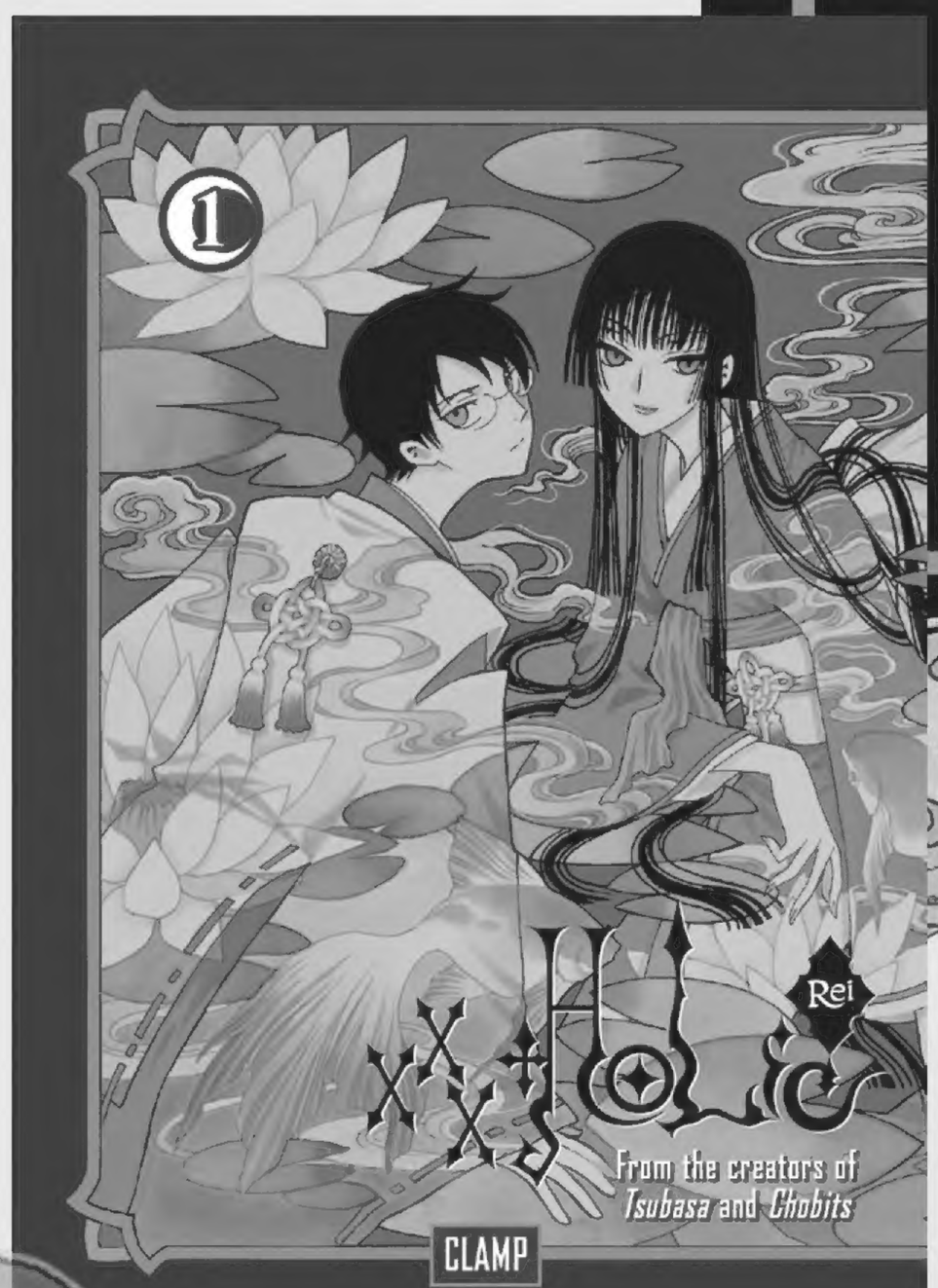
In an office romance, there's a fine line between sexy and awkward... and that line is where Asako — a woman who sweats copiously — meets Koutarou — a perfume developer who can't get enough of Asako's, er, scent. Don't miss a romcom manga like no other!

KC KODANSHA COMICS

"Clever, sassy, and original....*xxxHOLiC* has the inherent hallmarks of a runaway hit."
—NewType magazine

Beautifully seductive artwork and uniquely Japanese depictions of the supernatural will hypnotize CLAMP fans!



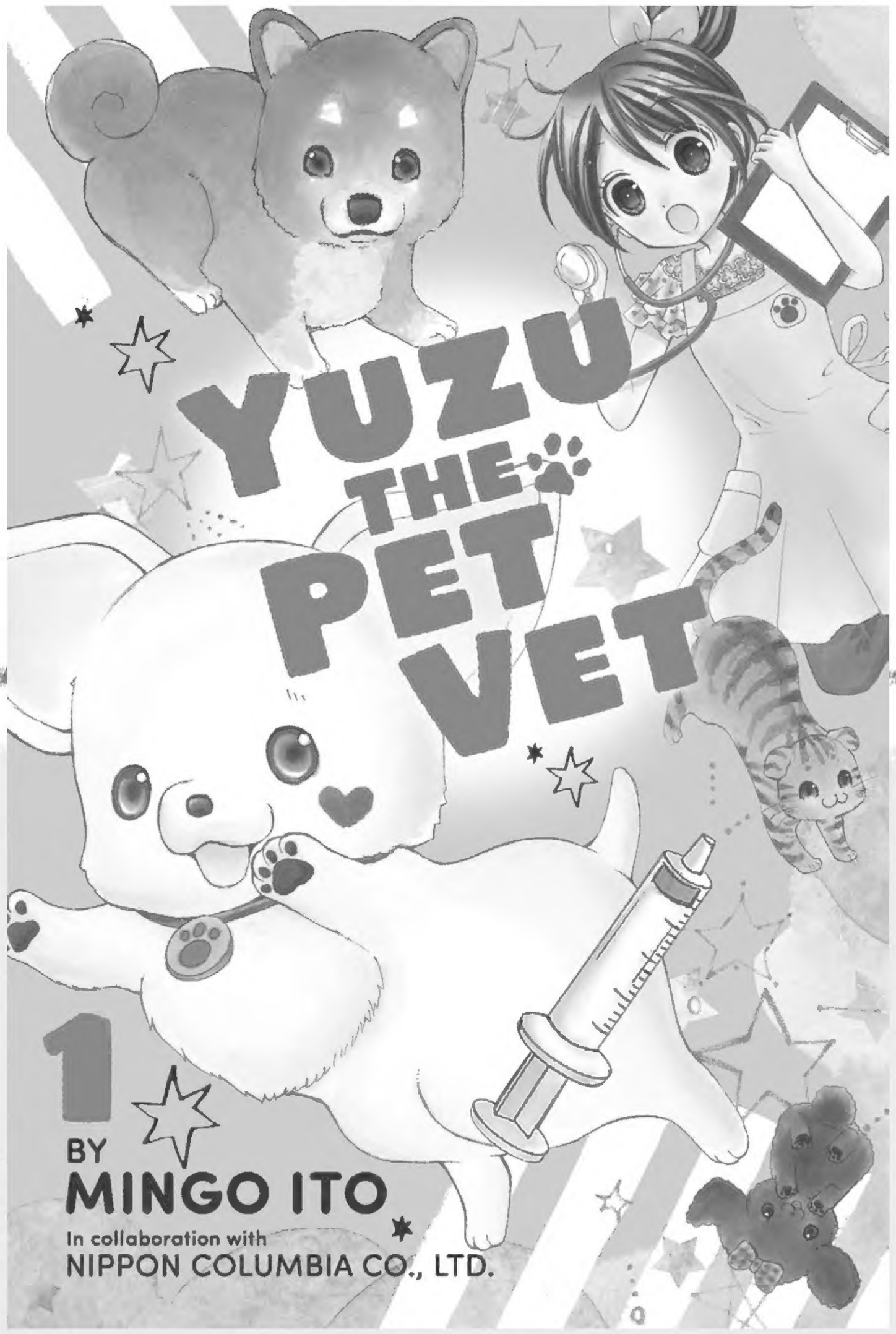


xxxHOLiC © CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.
xxxHOLiC Rei © CLAMP·ShigatsuTsuitachi CO.,LTD./Kodansha Ltd.

Kimihiro Watanuki is haunted by visions of ghosts and spirits. He seeks help from a mysterious woman named Yuko, who claims she can help. However, Watanuki must work for Yuko in order to pay for her aid. Soon Watanuki finds himself employed in Yuko's shop, where he sees things and meets customers that are stranger than anything he could have ever imagined.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

CUTE ANIMALS AND LIFE LESSONS, PERFECT FOR ASPIRING PET VETS OF ALL AGES!



Yuzu the Pet Vet © Mingo Ito / NIPPON COLUMBIA CO., LTD./ Kodansha Ltd.

For an 11-year-old, Yuzu has a lot on her plate. When her mom gets sick and has to be hospitalized, Yuzu goes to live with her uncle who runs the local veterinary clinic. Yuzu's always been scared of animals, but she tries to help out. Through all the tough moments in her life, Yuzu realizes that she can help make things all right with a little help from her animal pals, peers, and kind grown-ups.

Every new patient is a furry friend in the making!

Something's Wrong With Us 9

Kodansha Digital Edition

Something's Wrong With Us volume 9 copyright © 2019 Natsumi Ando
English translation copyright © 2022 Natsumi Ando

All rights reserved.

First published in Japan in 2019 by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.
Electronic publishing rights for this English edition arranged through Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.

No portion of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the copyright holders.

English digital edition published by Kodansha USA Publishing, LLC, New York.

ISBN: 9781684913091

Digital Edition: 1.0.0

Translation: Sawa Matsueda Savage
Lettering: Nicole Roderick
Editing: Jordan Blanco
Kodansha Comics edition cover design by Matthew Akuginow
Ripping: 1r0n

kodansha.us